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Four killed in Yemeni clashes

SANAA (AP) — At least four people, including two children, have been killed in gunbattles between government forces and tribesmen suspected of kidnapping French tourists last week, security sources reported Wednesday. A soldier and a tribesman were among the dead, the sources said. Four children and six combatants from both sides were wounded in the gunfire that raged a crowded village Tuesday and early Wednesday in the Shabwa region 240 kilometres east of Sanaa, the capital. The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the children were caught in the cross fire. It was not known if the tribesman who was shot dead was among the men wanted by authorities for kidnapping the 17 French tourists last Thursday. Eighteen suspects in the abduction are being sought by authorities. A number of them had tried to seek refuge in the village, but were tracked down by government forces. It was unclear whether the clashes had ebbed by Wednesday evening.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الرأي.

Palestinians revote at 2 Gaza booths

JABALIYA (AP) — With armed police standing guard, hundreds of Palestinians voted for the second time in 11 days Wednesday after election officials invalidated the first ballot because of cheating. The revote in the town of Jabaliya and the adjacent refugee camp added to an atmosphere of confusion and suspicion. That has clouded the Jan. 20 elections for an 88-seat legislative council. Dozens of candidates have lodged complaints with the Central Elections Commission, with alleged irregularities ranging from missing ballot boxes to manipulation of illiterate voters. Elections officials said Wednesday that final results would only be released in the second half of February, after all the vote tallies have been checked and complaints investigated. According to preliminary figures, Yasser Arafat won 38.2 per cent of the votes in the race for president of the Palestinian National Authority, while members of his Fatah faction won about 50 of the council seats. International elections observers, including former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, have said the vote was free and fair, despite some irregularities.

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Cabinet change is likely to take some more time

By Nermeen Murad
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Government and informed sources yesterday sought to scotch the wave of rumours and speculation that swept the capital over the past few days about an imminent Cabinet change to take place today.

"His Majesty the King has asked the prime minister to introduce a major reshuffle in his Cabinet," a well-informed source told the Jordan Times Wednesday. "As far as I know, the choice was still in Sharif Zeid's hands until two days ago. But I am not aware of anything happening since then."

The speculation about the change, which was also articulated in influential government circles, did in fact go beyond a mere reshuffle, to the extent that the King was believed ready to name a new prime minister and Cabinet on Thursday.

According to the most-talked about scenarios, either former Prime Minister Zeid



Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker

Rifai or Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti was being considered for the job of prime minister, while the choice of a new Royal Court Chief appeared to be settled in favour of former Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali.

Other than the confirmation that Sharif Zeid had

received the King's go-ahead for a major government reshuffle, sources were unable to confirm that the prime minister had moved to make the change or, if not, that he had decided that the King's directives could be better served by another prime minister whose choice had yet to be decided by the King.

According to sources close to Sharif Zeid, the premier was still weighing his options before taking concrete steps towards either introducing a reshuffle to his government or bowing out in favour of another candidate.

A number of Cabinet ministers contacted by the Jordan Times over the past two days said that Sharif Zeid did not confirm that the King had asked him to reshuffle his Cabinet, but they did not rule out that they may have been kept in the dark by the usually secretive premier.

However, the well-informed source who confirmed that Sharif Zeid had

(Continued on page 7)

Crown Prince and Demirel discuss regional projects

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday paid a brief working visit to Turkey at an invitation by Turkish President Sulem Demirel.

During the one-day visit, Prince Hassan held talks with President Demirel on Jordanian-Turkish relations and scopes of regional cooperation.

The Crown Prince and Mr. Demirel discussed Jordanian efforts aimed at reaching a regional cooperation formula with the objective of improving the living standards in the region's countries.

Mr. Demirel lauded such efforts, saying Turkey values Jordan's perspectives on the issue.

Prince Hassan, who concluded the visit to Turkey after a stopover in Ankara, stressed the need for the Middle Eastern countries to plan the future of their region and to stop accepting "ready-made" international schemes designed to resolve the region's problems.

The Crown Prince underlined Turkey's important role in managing water resources in the region and said water has always been a cause for cooperation among the region's people, even at times of hostility.

He also stressed the importance of boosting regional cooperation, and especially Turkey's role, in developing new water sources and finding a suitable regional cooperation formula.

The two sides, meeting at the presidential palace in Ankara where the Crown Prince was the guest of honour at the iftar hosted by Mr. Demirel, discussed means to address the problem of water scarcity in the region.

The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti and members of the delegation accompanying Prince Hassan as well as Turkish Foreign Minister Deniz Baykal and senior officials.

Upon returning home late Wednesday, Prince Hassan said in a statement to the press that his talks in Ankara focused on several regional issues, with special emphasis on water issues and preparations to hold a water summit as recommended by the Amman international summit. The visit, he said, stressed the two countries' desire to continue constructive dialogue on means to enhance bilateral ties and coordinate stands on regional issues.

Peres upbeat over Syria talks; Beilin says time is running out

LONDON (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Wednesday he remained optimistic over Israeli-Syrian peace talks wrapping up in the United States, despite Damascus' assessment that they were stuck in an Israeli-caused deadlock.

"I think they were successful meetings, a great deal of progress was done," Mr. Peres said of the talks that were concluding Wednesday in the Washington suburb of Wye Plantation, Maryland.

In Paris, Israeli cabinet minister Yossi Beilin said time was running out for a peace agreement between Israel and Syria, with only a few months remaining for peace talks to succeed.

"As we don't have too much time, the question now

is whether it is possible to make this in 1996. I'm not sure," Mr. Beilin told reporters after meeting French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette.

Mr. Beilin has been mandated by Mr. Peres to track the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Beilin said it was important an accord be reached in 1996 because of upcoming elections in Israel and the United States.

"I think that what we have in front of us is several weeks, or perhaps very few months, and then we have to move," he said.

He blamed the lack of progress on what he called Syrian opposition to compromises on the major issues of security arrangements, water and borders.

Mr. Beilin said Mr. De Charette, just back from visits to Syria and Lebanon, told him he believed Syria sincerely wanted peace with Israel.

"He also said to me that the Lebanese were sure that, if Israel withdraws from the southern part of Lebanon, the Hizbollah forces would not try to fight against Israel because they are fighting against us as long as we are there in this part of Lebanon," Mr. Beilin said.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting here with British Prime Minister John Major, Mr. Peres said the agenda of the talks with Syria was "a very rich and complicated one, but I'm rather satisfied with the results."

Iraqi oil terminals ready for tankers

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq has prepared its oil terminals to receive tankers as soon as it is permitted to export oil again, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said on Wednesday.

"Iraq's ports and its operational and technical cadres are ready to provide maritime services to oil tankers and ships in case oil exports are resumed through our ports on the Arabian Gulf," INA said, quoting Hassan Fleih Al Ma'ini, Iraq's port director.

Iraqi and United Nations officials are to meet next week to begin talks aimed at implementing a plan to allow Iraq to sell \$2 billion worth of oil over six months to pay for urgent humanitarian needs for its sanctions-hit people.

Oil analysts said that given current oil prices, Iraq would export about 600,000 barrels per day (bpd) under the plan although it is unclear whether an agreement could be reached that was palatable to both sides.

Iraq has been banned from selling its oil on world markets since it invaded Kuwait in August 1990 but Iraqi oil officials say the country does not face insurmountable difficulties in producing or exporting its oil if the forthcoming talks bear fruit.

The officials said that despite extensive damage on oil

installations during the 1991 Gulf war, the country's production capacity is about 2.6 million bpd with the large Kirkuk and Rumailah fields back on stream. Iraq could export about two million bpd of that through outlets via Turkey and ports in the northern Gulf.

Oil Minister Amir Rasheed said in a televised interview last week that Iraq could increase its production capacity to 3.5 million bpd in less than two years. Iraqi crude oil output peaked in 1979 at 3.46 million bpd.

Port director Ma'ini told JNA that Iraqi engineers had installed communications systems and maritime signals inside and outside territorial waters. He said 25 platforms, at smaller oil ports Umm Qasr and Khor Al Zubair were being prepared to receive tankers with loads of up to 35,000 tonnes. The larger terminals Mina Al Bakr and Khor Al Amayak together can now handle up to one million bpd of exports.

To meet its own domestic needs and that of Jordan, Iraq is producing more than 700,000 bpd of crude oil. Sources say oil products like diesel oil and lubes also are smuggled into Turkey via large lorries ferrying food supplies into Iraq.

Arafat: PLO charter 'superseded'

STOCKHOLM (Agencies) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has said the clause in the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) founding document that calls for the destruction of the Jewish state had been superseded, but did not confirm that it would soon be annulled.

Mr. Arafat, on his first foreign visit since being elected president of the West Bank and Gaza areas transferred to Palestinian rule under a peace deal with Israel, said the main changes to the controversial charter had already been made.

"I declared it in front of the U.N. General Assembly in Geneva (in 1988), and I told a press conference afterwards that it (the clause) became 'caduque' (which means superseded) (in French)," Mr. Arafat told a news conference Tuesday.

The clause in the 1968 Palestine covenant says "the liberation of Palestine is a national duty to repulse the Zionist, imperialist invasion ... to purge the Zionist presence from Palestine."

Mr. Arafat did not confirm that the clause would be annulled, but Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dayan, who accompanied Mr. Arafat on his visit, said he was sure the newly-elected Palestinian council will fulfil its promise to do so.

"We are sure that ... the Palestinian council will annul the existing covenant. It has a clear commitment to annul it two months after the first meeting of the council," Mr. Dayan said.

An Arafat aide said meanwhile the amendment of the PLO charter might happen later than promised.

Mr. Arafat has pledged to

change the charter two months after Palestinians convene their legislative council, elected in a historic poll on Jan. 20.

"The Palestinian leadership is doing everything possible to meet that commitment. I say ... there's no need to stand over U.S. with a stopwatch," Ahmad Tibi, an Israeli Arab, told Israel's army radio.

"This date is also not a sacred date," Dr. Tibi said, borrowing the expression Israelis used when deadlines for peace deals were missed.

Commenting on media reports that Sweden could act as a mediator in the efforts to bring about a permanent settlement in the Middle East, Mr. Arafat said: "Both Israel and Palestine are looking for a more important Swedish role in the peace process."

U.S. diplomacy defuses Aegean tension

Combined agency dispatches

U.S. DIPLOMACY ended a crisis between Greece and Turkey after foreign affairs trouble-shooter Richard Holbrooke persuaded the two to withdraw on Wednesday from a disputed islet in the Aegean Sea.

Both Turkish and Greek soldiers had been completely withdrawn from the islets by 0700 GMT on Wednesday, Turkey's semi-official Anadolu news agency reported.

"We are retaining our sovereign rights over the islets," Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos said after a six-and-a-half hour emergency cabinet meeting that ended at dawn.

Defence Minister Gerassi

mos Arsenis said the situation would turn to the "status quo," ending the worst crisis since the two countries nearly went to war in 1957 over Aegean seabed mineral rights.

"This is satisfactory for us," he said.

Turkish Foreign Minister Deniz Baykal said he was happy Greece had decided to withdraw its troops and that Turkey would act accordingly.

The withdrawal has begun and you could even say it has finished. It's at the last stage," Turkey's Foreign Minister Deniz Baykal told television.

Turkey and Greece had sent warships, fighter planes and marine commando units

to the rocks between the Turkish coast and the Greek island of Kalymnos.

"Turkey was successful in a task that defied it and came out of a difficult operation victoriously," Mr. Baykal said.

U.S. President Bill Clinton had contacted the leaders of both countries to urge a peaceful solution to the dispute over sovereignty of the uninhabited rocks.

The flags of Turkey and Greece, which had been planted on different parts of the rocks, were taken down.

Turkish television showed members of a crack marine commando unit deflating rubber dinghies on the main land after returning from the rocks, known as Kardak in

Turkish and India in Greek.

Mr. Baykal said he was saddened by news that a Greek navy helicopter had crashed during the Greek pull out. Three people were missing.

Greece says the rocks were ceded to it by Italy in 1947 along with the main islands of the Dodecanese chain off the Turkish coast but Ankara disputes this.

Mr. Holbrooke, an assistant secretary of state, who led the Bosnia peace negotiations, said the United States has deployed aircraft in to observe the pullback and give the two sides assurances the other would comply.

Mr. Holbrooke planned to launch a Cyprus peace initiative in mid-February but said

the trip "will not be the launch of the Cyprus initiative" because there is no permanent government in Turkey and because the crisis over the islet is forcing a new focus on the Aegean.

Turkey is "the new frontline state of NATO (and) you cannot have the southern flank of NATO in constant tensions without a strategic instability which will ultimately wreck NATO," he said.

If Washington had not intervened in the crisis, "Turkey would have seized the islet and driven the Greeks off," he said. As it was, Turkey had commandos seize an adjacent islet as compromise negotiations were under way.



KING HOSTS IFTAR: His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday hosted an iftar in the Crown Prince's advisor Mohammad Saqqaf, honour of representatives of the governorates of Maan, Tafleeh and Aqaba. The iftar was attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, His Royal Highness Prince Faisal, shows the King and guests performing Royal Court Chief Marwan Qasem, Chief Maghreb prayers.

Government and deputies in dialogue on draft election law

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Consultations between Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and parliamentarians that started earlier this week might bring significant changes to the draft election law but they will not lead to a change in the one-person, one-vote formula, parliamentary sources said Wednesday.

Lower House of Parliament deputies are therefore seeking allocations of seats in each constituency corresponding to its population.

Opposition deputies are calling for the elimination of the quota system and some of them are seeking to introduce measures that would enable parties to run lists.

According to the government's proposed election law, that so far has not been presented to the House, electoral constituencies would be redrawn in accordance with the new administrative divisions introduced and approved by the Cabinet in November which increased the number of electoral districts from 20 to 32.

The changes proposed by the government also include lowering voting age from 19 to 18. The number of Lower

House seats will increase to 100 from the present 80 and other measures that help in facilitating the electoral procedure will also be adopted.

Hammad Abu Jamous, a member of the Democratic bloc in Parliament, described a meeting he and his bloc had with the prime minister on Tuesday as fruitful and positive and said Sharif Zeid promised to look into the bloc's proposals, especially a demand to reconsider the allocation of seats to correspond to the constituencies' population.

The Islamic Action Front deputies who also met with the premier described the meeting as constructive but said they would not fight the government to secure their demands outside "democratic means."

"The one-person, one-vote measure reinforce tribalism and sectarianism," said IAF Deputy Theib Abdullah. "We might not be able to change it but we will try to improve it as much as we can."

"The prime minister showed understanding to our remarks and point of views but how it will come out at the end is still unknown," he added. "We will do what we

can under the dome." According to leftist deputy Mustafa Sheikhat, the law which divided Jordan into 32 constituencies did not reflect the population concentration in each area.

He proposed that the number of the House seats be increased to 120 and that 20 of the seats be allocated to candidates representing different political parties "so as to enhance the democratic process in the Kingdom."

"The voter should have the right to vote for a candidate from his own constituency and another from all over the Kingdom," Mr. Sheikhat told the Jordan Times. "If the law remains as it is, then the House will be dominated by tribal leaders."

Opposition deputies believe that any draft law presented by the government to the House will be fought hard. They say they presented a draft law, signed by 40 deputies, two years ago but that draft was not discussed by the House's Judicial Committee until now.

"The draft presented by the government should be based on the project that the deputies prepared and presented two years ago," IAF

(Continued on page 7)

Jordan, Germany review cooperation

BONN (Agencies) — Planning Minister Ruma Khalaf on Wednesday headed the Jordanian side in talks with German officials on economic ties between Jordan and Germany and financing development projects in Jordan and the Middle East.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irshaidat, who was present at the meeting, discussed with the German officials the prospect of financing water projects provided for in the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

Discussion at the meeting also dealt with regional economic institutions, particularly the establishment of a regional development bank as well as Jordanian-European relations in general and recent negotiations on a Jordanian-European partnership in particular.

Dr. Khalaf voiced her satisfaction with the outcome of the talks, saying the German side showed understanding and voiced support for Jordan's development efforts.

Germany, one of Jordan's major aid donors, has expressed interest in supporting schemes along Jordan's northern border with Israel estimated at some \$600 million, mostly through the European Union (EU).

Germany, which pays 28 per cent of the 15-nation

Serbs pull out tanks; WEF debates Bosnia

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Bosnian Serbs on Wednesday pulled their tanks out of areas earmarked for a land swap under Bosnia's peace plan, as world business leaders and politicians were poised to use their financial clout to push the peace process forward.

On the eve of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, the top civilian coordinator for Bosnia, Carl Bildt, said millions of dollars in up front cash was vital for the success of civilian aspects of the accord.

As world leaders prepared to mobilise cash for Bosnian reconstruction, Bosnian federation legislators Wednesday confirmed Izudin Kapetanovic as federation premier, his power-sharing cabinet including hardline Croat loyalists hand-picked by the main Muslim and Croat parties.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the NATO-led peace Implementation Force (IFOR) said Bosnian Serbs had completed the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the Sarajevo area, ahead of a midnight (2300 GMT) Saturday deadline.

However, last-minute problems could not be ruled out as a Bosnian army spokesman said Serbs and government forces were still in disagreement over a number of areas due for exchange.

Nevertheless, IFOR spokesman Colonel Konrad Freytag said in Zagreb that "the Serbs passed eight tanks

through the area," en route to the Serb stronghold of Pale, adding of the withdrawal: "It's over."

"So far compliance (with pull-out requirements) has been good and we expect that to continue," said another spokesman, Major Lou Giampicollo.

Bosnian government forces were due Thursday to take five artillery pieces off Mount Igman, which dominates the western approaches to the Bosnian capital.

But a Bosnian army official, speaking anonymously, said government forces and Bosnian Serbs had thus far failed to agree to a number of swaps in northeast Bosnia.

Bilateral talks had failed to produce an agreement on certain areas near Zvornik, in eastern Bosnia, and the Majevica hills around Tuzla, in the northeast.

The land swap would only work if IFOR troops moved in before the ex-belligerents pulled out. IFOR is due to enter the transfer areas only after Saturday's total withdrawal.

In Sarajevo, federation lawmakers voted in a new government which appeared to reinforce the power base of the Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) and the Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA).

Mr. Kapetanovic, a Muslim, secured the premiership while a Croat, Drago Bilandzija, was named his deputy and finance minister.

Raimond urges Paris to ease up stand over Iraq

PARIS (Agencies) — A former French foreign minister who went to Baghdad on what he said was a government-sanctioned trip, called on Paris late Tuesday to go easier on Iraq, including withdrawing from air surveillance of the country.

Jean-Bernard Raimond, speaking on his return from his Jan. 15-23 trip at the head of a parliamentary fact-finding team, made three proposals at a meeting of the National Assembly's foreign affairs committee.

Mr. Raimond said France should do its utmost to help next week's talks between Iraq and the United Nations on easing the effects of almost six years of oil and trade sanctions on the Iraqi people.

Under U.N. Resolution 986 which was adopted in April last year, Baghdad could export up to \$1 billion of oil per quarter in exchange for food and medicine under strict international control.

In a reference to the United States, Mr. Raimond said everything should be done to ensure that "those on the other side who are keeping the brakes on" do not raise obstructive political and legal points in relation to the resolution.

Mr. Raimond said France should also ease sanctions unilaterally, perhaps by no longer taking part in the surveillance flights over southern Iraq designed to forestall any new attempt by Baghdad to move on Kuwait.

"This surveillance no longer makes sense, and there is no more trouble in that region," Mr. Raimond said. "We must end Iraq's isolation little by little, perhaps restoring air links without lifting the whole of the embargo."

Finally, Mr. Raimond said, France should ask for the

embargo to be reexamined in depth once the head of the United Nations mission for the disarmament of Iraq, Rolf Ekeus, has made his report, in March or April.

"The lifting of the embargo is inevitable in the more or less long-term, and it is up to France, given its experience in this part of the world, to assist gradually but clearly the conclusion of a crisis which has gone on too long," he said.

Mr. Raimond said his report, in which he spoke of a "disastrous humanitarian situation" in Iraq but denied there was any famine, had been approved by the foreign affairs committee and given to President Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister Alain Juppé and Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette.

Mr. De Charette, whose ministry according to Mr. Raimond sanctioned the mission, was present at Tuesday's meeting, along with committee chairman and former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and the defence minister at the time of the Gulf war in 1991, Pierre Chevènement.

France must do all it can to prevent the United States from erecting political and judicial barriers to an easing of the sanctions, Mr. Raimond told a press conference.

"My fear is that in the current situation we run the risk of seeing the Americans one day deciding to lift the embargo. We would then lose all of our trump cards to the Americans' advantage," he said.

French oil firm ELF Aquitaine has reached an understanding to develop the Majnoon oilfield once sanctions are lifted while Paris-based Total S.A. has reached a similar accord in regard to the Nahr Umar oilfield.

British army experts to probe Gulf syndrome

LONDON (AFP) — British army medical experts are to launch a study to pin down the causes of the so-called Gulf war syndrome which hundreds of veterans of the 1991 conflict claim has afflicted them, the Defence Ministry said Tuesday.

Vice-Admiral Tony Reuell, the ministry official responsible for military medical services, suggested that tablets of a compound called naps which the troops took to counter biological and chemical weapons could be a factor.

The British authorities have always denied there is scientific evidence to link the series of illnesses, including loss of weight or memory, fatigue, depression and nausea, which many soldiers claim to have suffered since they served in the multinational effort to throw the Iraqis out of Kuwait.

Recent press reports have revealed the existence of malformed children being born to the wives of Gulf veterans.

Adm. Reuell said the study would involve a comparison of the medical records of servicemen who

were in the Gulf and those who were not, to determine if the former had developed significantly more ailments than the latter.

Experts would also investigate a possible unfavourable reaction between the series of routine vaccinations administered to the troops and the naps tablets.

Adm. Reuell noted that only British, Canadian and U.S. troops — with a handful of Norwegians — who had complained of Gulf war syndrome, and out of the 37 countries that took part in the campaign only Britain, Canada and the United States had given their soldiers naps.

However, an initial study by the Defence Ministry on 360 of Britain's more than 51,000 Gulf veterans — and similar investigations of 17,000 cases in the United States — had failed to conclude that a syndrome existed.

Hilary Meredith, a lawyer acting for 680 veterans claiming to suffer from Gulf war syndrome, called Tuesday's announcement a great step forward, but too late for 15 people who had already died.

House panel's task confined to Palestinians living in Jordan

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Parliamentarians on Wednesday differed over the responsibilities of the Lower House of Parliament towards Palestinians in the diaspora but finally agreed to limit its responsibilities to Palestinians in Jordan.

to one of the heated sessions of the House, parliamentarians with varying political affiliations differed over the responsibilities of the House's Palestine Committee, particularly whether it should be entitled the task of tackling the issue of stranded Palestinians in the diaspora.

The debate started when former Prime Minister Taha Al Masri (Amman) proposed that the committee's task should be limited to refugee affairs, the issue of Jerusalem, and Palestinian deportees but not to the affairs of Palestinians in the diaspora.

"But many Palestinians in the diaspora have Jordanian citizenship," said IAF

spokesperson Hamzeb Mansour (Amman). "We have tackled issues like the rights of the Chechens and the Sudanese," why not the Palestinians with whom we share a special relationship," said another IAF deputy, Mohammad Oweidah from Balqa.

The chairperson of the Palestine Committee, Anwar Hadid (Amman), agreed and said that the committee's handling of issues of concern to Palestinians in the diaspora was a must since "many stranded Palestinians outside Jordan hold Jordanian nationality."

But centrist deputies Abdul Karim Dughmi (Ma'raq) and Hammad Abu Jamous (Amman) said there was no need for further discussions since some of the tasks were the responsibility of the Department of Palestinian Affairs of the Foreign Ministry.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Abdul

Rauf Rawabdeh, asserting that he was speaking as a deputy, said there should be a balance to be maintained in defining the responsibilities since any mistake would be considered as an interference in other countries' affairs.

"The issue is over our national values," stated Ibrahim Kilani, an IAF deputy from Amman. "If a Palestinian was expelled to a country other than Jordan, isn't it the responsibility of the House to address this issue? Is this considered an interference in other countries' internal affairs?"

The House eventually voted in favour of rephrasing the whole paragraph on the tasks of the committee in the by-laws of the House. It entrusted the committee with following up on the situation of all exiled and stranded Palestinians in Jordan.

Egyptian government moves museum built over cemetery

SAQQARA, Egypt (AP) — The Egyptian government has ordered the removal of an unfinished museum after archaeologists realised it was built on top of a 2,700-year-old cemetery.

"We started to excavate around the site and we discovered archaeological artifacts such as mummies," said Zahi Hawass, the antiquities director at Giza and Saqqara. "The archaeological artifacts that have been found are enough to stop this building."

The site is near Djoser's 4,600-year-old step pyramid at Saqqara, considered the oldest stone building in the world.

Egyptian archaeologists feared the museum would clutter the landscape near the pyramid, which is south of Cairo, and could destroy still-undiscovered ruins and artifacts.

Just recently, workers uncovered burial grounds next to the museum's concrete pillars as well as black mud brick walls that surrounded the cemetery and Greco-Roman funeral masks and pottery.

Even as Culture Minister Farouk Hosni announced the decision, workers found a clay coffin with a small child's skeleton inside.

"We will remove the building," he told reporters near the pyramid. "But the pro-

ject itself is vital and important and we will build the museum at the entrance to the area."

The museum was to house pharaonic relics found in the Saqqara desert and a model version of the step pyramid and ruins that surrounded it. It was approved in 1990 by the official Higher Council for Antiquities on the condition it be built underground, and that the area be checked for remains before construction began.

Mr. Hosni said an investigation would determine why those conditions were not met. The government halted construction a month ago after having spent nearly \$18,000.

The museum's pillars were raised just 500 metres away from the pyramid, and officials in the area discovered the building was more than a metre higher than it was supposed to be.

On Tuesday, scaffolding encased concrete beams as boys carried sand from excavation sites just metres away. Pottery, some of it dating to 500 B.C., some older, littered the area.

King Netjerikhet Djoser of the Third Dynasty built his pyramid, the first step pyramid and lesser cousin to the Great Giza Pyramids, in 2,630 B.C.

Japan sends first unit of peacekeepers to Golan

TOKYO (AP) — Japan sent its first contingent of army personnel to the Golan Heights on Wednesday to provide logistical support to the U.N. peacekeeping operation there.

The departure marked the fourth dispatch of Japanese troops abroad since the passage of a law in 1992 that allows Japanese participation in U.N. missions on condition that the operation is peaceful.

The 16-man contingent, consisting of 14 Self-Defence Force personnel and two civilians, left Tokyo's new international airport at Narita on a flight for Paris just before noon, a Japanese Defence Agency spokesman said.

The peacekeepers will fly from Paris to Damascus before proceeding to the Golan Heights, said the spokesman who spoke on condition of

anonymity. The Japanese peacekeepers will replace a Canadian transport unit and will provide logistical support, such as transporting food. The spokesman said another 29 Self-Defence Force troops will leave for the Golan on Feb. 7.

The law allowing Japanese to join peacekeeping operations was enacted after Tokyo faced international criticism for failing to send personnel to support the U.N.-approved force that fought in the 1991 Gulf war.

In December Japan's cabinet approved a plan for Japanese peacekeepers to go to the Golan for a two-year assignment.

Japan's postwar constitution bans the use of force as a means of settling international disputes.

Morocco rejects charges

RABAT (R) — Moroccan authorities on Wednesday said accusations by opposition parties and human rights groups of violations committed against suspected smugglers in police detention were totally baseless.

The statement by the committee in charge of eradicating smuggling was in response to an open letter to the prime minister by a human rights group which said suspects were tortured and denied access to lawyers.

"The committee in charge of the campaign would like to remind the public that it has already explained to the press that these baseless and false rumours are meant to spread suspicion and hamper the government's policy to preserve the national interest and restore the country's credibility," the statement said.

Israeli doctor says he will not operate on Ethiopians

TEL AVIV (R) — An Israeli heart surgeon, stepping in to a controversy over blood banks' discarding of donations from Ethiopian Jews (Falasbas), has said he would avoid operating on Ethiopians for fear of catching AIDS.

Surgeon Danny Gur said critics of the policy, which has enraged Ethiopian Jews, were "righteous loud-mouths."

"I get pricked in operations. The danger is tremendous. I am afraid," he said on a television chat show.

Dr. Gur said he would perform surgery if an Ethiopian patient had no other alternative. But he said he would try to get out of operating on any member of a high-risk group.

Revelations that Israel's blood banks routinely discarded donations by Ethiopian Jews for fear of AIDS triggered riots in Jerusalem on Sunday night.

Dr. Gur hit out at charges that the policy was racist. "I would like to see the face of one of these righteous

loud-mouths when I hang a portion of blood donated by someone in a high-risk group to pour into his veins," he said.

Professor Eran Dolev, in charge of ethical standards in the Israel Medical Association, said Dr. Gur's remarks contradicted basic tenets of the profession.

"It is inconceivable to deny care to anyone who needs care according to our ability and skill. This runs counter to all ethical standards," Mr. Dolev told Israel Radio.

Israeli officials have promised to re-examine the blood policy. Pending an inquiry, Health Minister Ephraim Sneh has ordered blood banks to stop discarding Ethiopian blood and freeze it.

Mr. Sneh said this week that the rate of infection among Ethiopians by the HIV virus that causes AIDS was 50 times higher than in the general population.

Thousands of black Ethiopian Jews were secretly airlifted to Israel in the 1980s and 1990s.

Allies could crush Iraq — U.S. general

KUWAIT (R) — The United States' soldier in Kuwait said on Tuesday Gulf war allies would crush Iraq's ability to threaten its neighbours if it tried to repeat its 1990 invasion.

But Baghdad's record of unpredictability remained a concern, he added. General Stephen Rippe, chief of the U.S. embassy's office of military cooperation, said Kuwait and its allies were far better prepared to fight Iraq than they were before the 1991 war and the allies would continue to protect Kuwait from "tyranny."

"If (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein does something that causes another conflict to start in the Gulf, we will ensure that when the smoke settles he no longer has the capability to threaten his neighbours," Gen. Rippe said in an interview.

"We will not let Saddam Hussein roll into Kuwait City, again. The coalition simply won't do that. It would be an enormous miscalculation on his part to think that he would have the capability to do that even in the short term."

"There is an enormous (U.S.) forward presence

here. The U.S. would not sit still and allow Iraq to threaten neighbours."

Gen. Rippe's main job is readying American forces to help defend Kuwait in the event of another crisis, helping train Kuwait's armed forces, and liaising over U.S. military sales to Kuwait.

The level of threat from Iraq had remained constant since the war but he added: "It's real, it's credible and its unpredictable, and that's why we're so concerned about it."

"You can read in the press that Saddam is trying very hard to reorganise and modernise his armed forces to recover from the war. Any prudent military man would be concerned about anything Iraqis do to rearm just because of the track record."

Gen. Rippe said in answer to a question he had seen no indication that President Saddam was not firmly in control of his military.

Kuwait was steadily building its own high-tech military deterrent and by the end of a 10-year post-war modernisation plan "Kuwait will have a very capable armed forces" that would provide an enormous deterrent for any potential aggressor.

Baghdad Observer is turned weekly because of sanctions

BAGHDAD (J.T.) — The Iraqi Ministry of Culture and Information has decided to print the only English language daily, the Baghdad Observer, on a weekly rather than daily basis due to shortage of printing material which is hard to obtain under the current U.N. sanctions on Iraq, according to a decision taken this week.

It was the first step of its kind to be taken by the ministry and came two weeks after President Saddam Hussein replaced Hamed Yousef Hamadi with Abdul Ghani Abdul Ghafour as minister of culture and information, according to report published in Al Bustour daily on Wednesday.

The paper quoted Iraqi journalists as expressing dismay at the move, which, they

said, will negatively affect Iraq saying that the decision will deprive Iraq of a voice in the international arena.

The shortage of printing paper in Iraq over the past five years of sanctions forced the state-owned daily newspaper to reduce their pages from 16 to eight and later to four pages appearing in tabloid form and distributing 18,000 copies daily down from 120,000 before the Gulf crisis. The Al Bustour Association is reported to be examining the situation and the prospect of transferring as many as 700 journalists from the state-owned papers to other departments affiliated to the Ministry of Culture and Information if circumstances cause further difficulties.

Jordan Times
Tel: 684311 / 699634

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 73111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

13:00 Fumam Sam
13:10 Disney's Aladdin (cartoon)
13:30 The Legend of Treasure Islands
14:00 My Secret Identity
14:15 NBA
15:15 The New Leave it to Beaver
16:30 Dec. — Adventures of the Old West
17:00 Supplic Et Virginie
17:30 Vurians — Tataraz
18:00 News in French
19:15 Magazine — Archimede
19:30 News Headlines
19:45 Carrel and Company
20:00 Dec. — Magazine II
20:15 The Album Show
21:10 Drama — Pride and Prejudice
22:00 News in English
22:25 Feature film: "Sharpe's Rifles"
23:59 Series — Matlock

PRAYER TIMES

08:06 Fair
08:26 (Sunrise) Doha
11:49 Dhuhr
14:47 'Asr
17:12 Maghrib
18:32 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Swellish, Tel. 810741
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632765
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637441
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622466
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 652626
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 652526
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Warm weather conditions will prevail with temperatures above average and winds southwesterly moderate to active. On Friday and Saturday, temperatures are expected to drop significantly with a chance for rain in all parts of the Kingdom and winds becoming westerly active.

In Aqaba, winds will be southerly moderate to active and sea rough.

Min./Max. temp. Amman 8/16
Aqaba 13 / 23
Deserts 5 / 18
Jordan Valley 15 / 23

Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 19 Aqaba 23, Humidity readings: Amman 48 per cent, Aqaba 31 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Fayez Al Dabbas 759155
Dr. Nidal Al As'ad 751672
Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi 893542
Dr. Mazen Nshar 830435
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637053
Nashroun pharmacy 636782
Al Salam pharmacy 636791
Yacoub pharmacy 644845
Shamsam pharmacy 637661
Nashroun pharmacy 636782
Najih pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Ouna 281741
Al Ouda pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad 965550
Khalil pharmacy 965417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617100
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 643402
Traffic Police 966391
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 665800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 767467
Amman Municipality 767111
Telephone Information (emergency assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 8101231
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111
Radio Jordan 771111
Water Authority 660101
Jordan Electricity Authority 81615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 06-53201
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 06-53201

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 81/813/372
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn. 644281/6
Akilch Maternity, J. Amn. 64441/2
Malhas, J. Amman 636141
Palestine, Shmashan 607071
Shmashan Hospital 649131
University Hospital 648445
Al-Mashar Hospital 667278
The Islamic, Abdali 66127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 661144/6
Italian, Al-Muhajirin 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 662540/50
Amal Hospital 67155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865194

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital 810986/61
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al-Mashar Modern Hospital (09)984041

Princess Basma Hospital 06275556
Greek Catholic Hospital 06257275
The Al Nalees Hospital 06257011

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 06314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:00 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:15 Dhahran (RJ)
07:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:15 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
07:30 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
07:30 New Delhi (RJ)
08:00 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
08:00 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Colombo (RJ)
08:20 London (RJ)
08:20 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
08:20 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
08:20 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
08:20 Copenhagen (RJ)
08:20 Moscow (RJ)
08:20 Athens (RJ)
08:30 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

19:15 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
19:35 Rome (RJ)
19:35 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:05 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:40 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
12:40 Sharjah (AH)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
14:00 Doha (OT)
16:10 Dubai (EK)
19:00 Paris, Damascus (AF)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
20:10 Cairo (MS)
01:15 Istanbul (TK)
01:20 Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:15 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
07:30 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
07:30 New Delhi (RJ)
08:00 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
08:00 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Colombo (RJ)
08:20 London (RJ)
08:20 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
08:20 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
08:20 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
08:20 Copenhagen (RJ)
08:20 Moscow (RJ)
08:20 Athens (RJ)
08:30 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

20:45 Larnaca (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Jakarta (RJ)
21:05 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
22:05 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
22:30 Jeddah (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:50 Beirut, London (BA)
07:45 Abu Dhabi, Beirut (ME)
13:30 Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)
13:30 Alghira (SV)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
14:40 Istanbul (OT)
17:15 Dubai (EK)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fbs per kg

Apple 700/500
Banana 630/630
Banana (Mukammur) 840/650
Banana (Imposed) 800/600
Cabbage 70/30
Carrot 200/120
Cauliflower 150/100
Cucumbers (large) 200/120
Cucumbers (small) 570/260
Eggplant 220/120
Garlic 100/800
Grape Fruit 300/120
Lemon 330/220
Marrow (large) 150/100
Marrow (small) 280/200
Onion (green) 140/150
Onion (dry) 140/150
Orange 600/450
Pepper (hot) 500/400
Pepper (sweet) 500/400
Pistachio 200/140
Pistachio 170/110
Rudish 700/500
Spring Beans 700/500
Spinach 180/120
Tomato 140/90



HOSTING WOMEN LEADERS: Her Majesty Queen Noor, who is the Honorary President of the General Federation of Jordanian Women (GFJW) and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (BPWC), greets guests at an iftar she hosted Wednesday for the members of the GFJW and BPWC and for the nine women elected as municipal council representatives. Senator Lella Sharaf, Minister of Social Development Salwa Damen-Masri and Advisor to the Queen In'am Mufti also attended the iftar, which was held at Raghdan Palace (photo by Crystal)

Premier forms panel to prepare for Jordan-Japan relations conference

Japan festival to be held in Amman in June

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker has formed a national committee in preparation for the coming conference on Jordanian-Japanese relations and the Japan Festival in Jordan in June.

According to a statement Wednesday by the Institute of Diplomacy, the committee will be headed by Mazen Armouti, advisor to HRH Crown Prince Hassan and president of the institute.

The committee, which is to assume its responsibilities soon, comprises the secretaries-general of the ministries of Culture, Planning, Tourism, Infor-

mation, and Foreign Affairs, the director general of the Department of Provisions and Supplies at the Ministry of Finance, the Jordanian ambassador to Japan, the vice-president for Academic Affairs at the University of Jordan, Executive Assistant of Public Relations at Royal Jordanian Munib Toukan, Director General of the Business Bank Wasfi Azar, President of the Amman Chamber of Commerce Haidar Murad, Director of Jordan Television Nasser Judeh, and Zaki Ayoubi, member of the Jordanian-Japanese Friendship Association, the statement said.

In cooperation and coordination with a Japanese national committee set up for the same purpose, the statement said, the Jordanian panel will supervise the Kingdom's contribution to the planned conference in related economic, informational, cultural, scientific, and tourism fields, and activities within the framework of the Japan Festival in Jordan. The festival, said the statement, is a result of the success of Jordan Week in Japan held in Tokyo last May under the patronage of Crown Prince Hassan and HRH Princess Sarvath.

Amman to host annual meeting of Canadian envoys

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdul Karim Kabariti Wednesday received in his office Canada's ambassadors to 14 different countries in the Middle East, who are currently holding their annual meeting in Amman.

Mr. Kabariti outlined Jordan's position with regard to the peace process and the democratic experience in Jordan and discussed with the envoys issues related to regional and international cooperation in political and economic spheres.

The minister voiced Jordan's appreciation of Canada's role in the peace

process, noting that Canada chairs the working group on refugees in the multilateral phase of the peace talks.

In addition, Mr. Kabariti said Jordan appreciates the French government's decision to halt its nuclear tests noting that the peace treaty signed between the Kingdom and Israel provided for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East.

The Canadian ambassadors hold regular annual meetings to discuss developments in the region. Last year's meeting took place in Damascus.

Judge postpones trial of Al Hayat correspondent

Key prosecution witnesses fail to appear in court on first day

By Ghalia Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The long-awaited trial of a Jordanian journalist accused of slandering, libel against public officials, not being a member of the Jordan Press Association (JPA) as well as violating two articles in the Press and Publications Law was deferred Wednesday until Feb. 8 due to the failure of two key prosecution witnesses to appear in court.

Salameh Ne'niat, the Amman correspondent of the London-based Al Hayat newspaper and Jihad Al Khazen, the newspaper's chief editor, were charged for publishing an

article on Sept. 20 alleging that 42 local businessmen, journalists and a cabinet minister were on the Iraqi government's payroll.

The article quoted "informed and official sources" as saying that after the defection to Jordan of two senior Iraqi officials on Aug. 8, Iraq was attempting to recruit Jordanian journalists and to revive all pro-Baghdad forces in the Kingdom by offering gifts to create a trend that runs counter to the official Jordanian position towards Iraq.

Columnist Tareq Masarweh had demanded in one of his articles in Al Rai Arabic daily that Al Hayat and Mr. Ne'niat be prosecuted and

had expressed willingness to sue both parties. But the case was then initiated by Public Prosecutor Jamal Al Zu'bi.

Mr. Zu'bi, ordered a two-week detention of Mr. Ne'niat on Oct. 3. Mr. Ne'niat was released on bail on Oct. 5. Until Wednesday's trial opening, hearings in the Ne'niat case were postponed three times.

When he appeared before the Amman Court of First Instance for the fourth time, Mr. Ne'niat was formally charged and pleaded innocent to all charges. The charges included overlooking, objectivity, honesty and accuracy in commenting on news, harming national

unity, inciting crime and planting seeds of hatred and division among members of society.

The pressing of charges against Mr. Ne'niat was delayed until the court could send an official notification to Mr. Al Khazen in London, demanding that he appear in court in Jordan.

Mr. Ne'niat told the Jordan Times on Wednesday that he is ready to defend himself and his newspaper with adequate and solid documentation in addition to witnesses including government officials who are prepared to testify on his favour, he added.

UNIFEM-EU establish contact with NGOs

AMMAN (J.T.) — The European Commission in Jordan has organized jointly with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), a brainstorming session on human rights and civil society in Jordan.

According to a UNIFEM statement, the session, which took place earlier this week, was attended by representatives of around twelve Jordanian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are active in the areas of human rights, women, children, environment, democracy, youth and religion.

During the session, the statement said, the various groups gave presentations about their organizations and discussed the national issues that are of concern to their organizations.

They also discussed the various obstacles facing the development of their organizations and operation, the statement said.

The presentations and discussions were followed by interventions from UNIFEM and the European Commission representatives who highlighted their organization's perspective

plans for working with the civil society in the areas of human rights and governance.

According to the statement, Zohra Merabet, UNIFEM regional programme advisor, opened the meeting by introducing UNIFEM's strategy for 1996 which focuses on the economic participation and the political empowerment of women.

She mentioned that the activities of UNIFEM will focus on the follow-up to the Beijing Conference and working together with governments and NGOs towards the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action at national level, the statement said.

Ms. Merabet also mentioned, the statement said, that one main area of focus for UNIFEM at this stage is women's human rights, good governance and conflict resolution.

According to the statement, Mr. Mestre, representative of the European Commission in Jordan, said that this meeting comes as a follow-up to the Barcelona meeting and the Barcelona Declaration that emphasized the importance of the

social and human rights aspects of the current developments taking place in the region.

He added that the European Union has specified three pillars for action in the coming period being peace-building, economic prosperity and cultural and social partnership, the statement said.

Within this context, according to the statement, the EU is launching a nine million ECU programme called MEDA (Democracy allocated for projects with partners from 12 Mediterranean non-member countries).

The meeting was concluded with recommendations to hold follow-up sessions to enable NGOs to develop projects and write proposals to the EU that might benefit from the MEDA Line programmes, said the statement.

The participants also commented on the importance of such meetings that enable NGOs to network together and be better informed of donor policies and guidelines, it said.

Court hands down death sentence in Jabal Taj murder case

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Criminal Court Wednesday sentenced a 21-year-old man to death for killing an elderly woman in Jabal Taj last September.

The court tribunal, comprised of Judge Abdul Rahman Tawfiq and Judges Ismael Hmouz and Miflch Mubaidin, sentenced Mubammad Ra'ed Mahmoud to death after he was found guilty of the premeditated murder of Ezzieh Hamdallah Nabulsi, 70, in her Jabal Taj home.

The defendant, who had pleaded not guilty, stood

impassive when the sentence was announced. He remained calm and showed no emotion as he was escorted by security officers out of the packed courtroom.

According to court documents, in his confession to police 22 days after he was arrested, Mahmoud, who was engaged to one of the victim's grand-daughters, said he killed Ezzieh while attempting to burglarize her home "because he thought that the victim was keeping money in her house."

On Sept. 3, the night of the murder, Mahmoud made his way into the victim's house and stabbed her

once in the back while she ascended the stairs of her house, the prosecution said. It said that when Mrs. Nabulsi fell Mahmoud stabbed her again several times in the chest and face.

Prosecutors said that when the defendant searched the victim's house he found only JD 7.

The court said that Mahmoud met the victim's grand-daughter Najah, six months before the incident and "he pretended that he wanted to marry her."

"Mahmoud scrutinized the victim and planned to kill her, thinking that she was keeping large sums of money in her house," Judge

Tawfiq said.

Forensic examinations indicated that the woman was stabbed 20 times in the back, chest and neck, court documents said.

Prosecutor General Ali Abu Hajileh had requested the maximum penalty for the defendant.

Mr. Mahmoud's defence attorney had requested reducing the charge of premeditated murder to manslaughter, stating that Mahmoud "was caught by surprise by the victim while entering her house and killed her."

The verdict will automatically be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within

30 days.

Teenagers sentenced to 9 years

Also Wednesday, the Criminal Court sentenced two youths, both aged 17, to nine years in prison with hard labour for sodomising a 14-year-old child last May.

Atif A. and Nidal M. were found guilty of sexually assaulting Alaa' I. on May 16.

According to court documents, the two met with Alaa' in the Wihdat area, lured him to a deserted area and raped him at knife point.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERT

- * Musical performance by Qusay Shibr at Phoenix Galler, on Thurs. at 8:30 p.m.
- * Ramadan recital by Sheikh Sabri Mudallal and his traditional Turning Dervishes Ensemble at the Philadelphia Hotel at 10:00 p.m.

FILMS

- * "A Soldier's Story," at the American Center, on Thursday at 2:00 p.m.

PLAYS

- * "Ramadan Supermarket" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Photography and paintings of railways and trains at Goethe-Institut (until Jan. 31).
- * Printmaking and paintings by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Luweibdeh. Also displaying paintings and sculptures by contemporary artists (until Feb. 18).
- * Contemporary and Traditional Jewellery at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, Shmeisani (Tel. 699141) (until Jan. 31).
- * Plastic (abstract) art exhibition by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheima (until Feb. 6).
- * Paintings by artist Raphael Chabrol at the French Cultural Centre (until Jan. 31).
- * Paintings by Amer Bani Yassin — "A Moment of Dream." At the Housing Bank Complex (until Feb. 5).

Mayor, store owners complain of food, beverage cart sales monopoly in Zarqa

By Samir Hijawi
Special to the Jordan Times

ZARQA — The Mayor of Zarqa, Mustafa Fayyad, as well as storeowners at the municipality's commercial complex have been complaining about what they describe as an awkward situation which resulted from the abuse of authority on the part of a former committee that ran the municipality's affairs and thus hurt their interests.

According to the storeowners, each of them pays the municipality JD3,000 in rent in addition to the JD 2,000 in "goodwill money" they paid a year ago when they first rented their stores from the municipality.

But they were dismayed to discover that they cannot trade in food and beverages because this right has been granted solely to Abdul Wahab Nawaiseh and his partner, café-owners at the municipality complex.

Not only are the stores banned from selling food and drinks except through the café, but Mr. Nawaiseh also monopolises the right to operate food and drink carts in the yard around the complex through a special contract between the cart vendors and himself, Nawaiseh and with tacit agreement from the former municipality, the store owners claim.

One street vendor, Yasser Fawzi, who sells his merchandise on three street carts in the complex, says he pays Mr. Nawaiseh and his partner JD 10 daily for each cart in exchange for the right to sell in the yard.

Mr. Nawaiseh has secured the right to engage 12 carts to sell in the yard and is charging the owner of each cart JD 10 a day, said Mr. Fawzi.

The owners of the stores complain that the street vendors were depriving them of selling their goods at a time when trading was in a recession.

For his part, the mayor said it is the right of the municipality and not the Nawaiseh café to allow

carts to sell goods in exchange for an annual fee, and the present arrangement harms the municipality's interests.

A year has passed since the municipality made the three-year agreement with Mr. Nawaiseh, and after the lease has lapsed, the municipality will terminate the deal and stop this "unjustified monopoly," said Mr. Fayyad.

The mayor and the store owners said Mr. Nawaiseh, a former police chief in Zarqa, paid the JD3,000 annual rent to the municipality but he also paid an additional JD 46,000 annually for the monopoly on the sale of food and drinks under the original contract with the government-appointed committee running the town's affairs.

But the merchants complain that Mr. Nawaiseh later secured the consent of the former municipality committee to have the monopoly of operating 12 food and beverage carts.

According to the mayor, the commercial complex located on the Amman-Zarqa road which comprises 132 stores was opened a year ago by the municipality as an investment project to earn the municipality steady income and to ease the pressure on the town centre.

He said that Mr. Nawaiseh was the only one not to pay

the goodwill money to the municipality at the start of business and he was the only person given the right to monopolise the sale of food and drinks.

A worker at Mr. Nawaiseh's café claims that the owner collects JD 190 a day from the cart vendors; and together with the café income, Mr. Nawaiseh makes at least JD 100,000 in net profit each year.

He said Mr. Nawaiseh and his partner have been able to clinch the deal with the municipality when it was run by a government-appointed committee chaired by then Zarqa Governor Misleh Tarawneh.



A food street vendor awaits customers in Zarqa's commercial complex (photo by S. Hijawi)

Chinese army to battle attempt by Taiwan to split

BEIJING (R) — China's military will fight any attempt to create an independent Taiwan and will not allow an inch of Chinese territory to be split away, an editorial in the Liberation Army Daily said Wednesday.

The People's Liberation Army wants peaceful reunification with the Nationalist-ruled island but China cannot wait indefinitely, said the editorial, issued to mark the first anniversary Tuesday of an eight-point proposal to renounce by President and Communist Party Chief Jiang Zemin.

"We will do our best to realise peaceful reunification without Chinese fighting Chinese," it quoted Mr. Jiang as saying.

The editorial came a day after a tough speech by Premier Li Peng in which he placed the blame for deteriorating ties between Taiwan and China squarely on the shoulders of Taiwan authorities, accusing them of a drive to seek independence.

China has been enraged by what it sees as an accelerated campaign by Taiwan's President Lee Teng-Hui over the past year to boost the international profile of the diplomatically isolated island, which Beijing regards as a renegade province.

Last week, a New York Times article sent a chill through Taiwanese when it reported that Beijing had plans for a missile attack on Taiwan after March 23 presidential polls. China gave an

ambiguous reply to questions about the report, allowing concerns in Taipei to linger.

"We adhere to peaceful reunification but will never undertake to abandon the use of force," the editorial said.

"The fact that we do not undertake to abandon the use of force is not a threat directed at our Taiwan compatriots, but at some foreign forces attempting to interfere in China's reunification and those seeking the 'independence of Taiwan'," it said.

Both Taipei and Beijing say they want to end the division that began with the flight of the defeated Nationalist armies to Taiwan at the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. But their terms are very different.

China has avoided setting a timetable for reunification, although it has stressed the issue will top its agenda once it has resumed sovereignty over the British colony of Hong Kong in 1997 and Portuguese enclave Macau in 1999.

"Striving to end the national separation by means of peace does not mean that the process of peaceful reunification can be delayed indefinitely," the editorial said.

It warned that attempts by unidentified foreign forces to split Taiwan from China would be met with force and "if the Taiwan authorities insist on having their own way and engage in separatism, we will never sit by idly and remain indiffer-

ent."

"It is the sacred duty stipulated in the constitution for the PLA to safeguard China's unity and security," it said. "We will never permit a single inch of China's territory to be split from our motherland."

The Liberation Army Daily article and a similar editorial in the People's Daily, monthpiece of the Communist Party, both vilified Taiwan's President Lee for plotting independence for Taiwan.

"Although Lee Teng-Hui is trying to cloak his separatist activities with 'democracy', his real aim is to turn Taiwan into a 'political entity' independent of China," the People's Daily said.

"So long as Lee does not stop his national split activities, we will never cease our struggle against separatism."

Beijing flew into a fury last year when President Lee was allowed to make a landmark private visit to the United States, a move China saw as an overt bid to raise Taiwan's standing with U.S. complicity.

Taiwan Wednesday brushed off Chinese accusations that it was moving toward independence and said it would only hold peace talks with China when the Communist government renounces the use of force.

"We are not afraid to hold peace talks with the mainland, but we will never do it under threat," said Su Chi, vice chairman of the cabinet-level Mainland Affairs Council, which is Taiwan's

top mainland policy planning body.

"We refuse to talk until Beijing renounces the use of force against us," added the official.

He stressed this does not mean Taiwan has abandoned its policy of eventual reunification with the mainland, but said "they must prove they are friendly."

Mr. Su's comments came in reaction to a speech by Chinese Premier Li Peng Tuesday in which he said the "impractical preconditions" set by Taiwan for the talks had created major obstacles in moves to end hostility and forge national reunification.

Mr. Li, speaking on the first anniversary of President Jiang's blueprint for Taiwan's reunification, clearly indicated there would be no change in Beijing's policy of calling for dialogue with Taipei while threatening to invade should the island move toward independence.

He said Taiwan's first democratic presidential polls could not change Beijing's stance, whatever their outcome.

But Mr. Su Chi said: "If we do not make this insistence, once the talks process with the mainland has started, we would have to beg the Chinese Communists not to intimidate us."

"This would put us in a very disadvantageous position," he told a press briefing. "You are not in an equal position to talk if someone is pointing a gun at you."



A student demonstrator armed with a slingshot peeks out of a window of Nicaragua's Foreign Ministry Building during a student takeover. The demonstrators held four foreign ambassadors and more than 200 office workers in the building, demanding a higher budget for state universities (Reuter photo)

Nicaraguan student protesters release diplomats and women

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (R) — Several hundred students occupying Nicaragua's Foreign Ministry released several foreign ambassadors and all the women it held captive, but kept about 100 civil servants in the building late Tuesday night, officials said.

Initially, more than 200 civil servants were held inside, but the students, who were seeking increased funding for state universities, later released the roughly 100 women.

They also allowed the ambassadors of Pakistan, the Philippines, Bolivia and Germany to leave.

"I have no idea why they kept us. I have no idea why they let us go," Pakistani Ambassador Manzar Shafiq told Reuters upon his release. "This is the Philippine ambassador. We have come out together. There are none (no diplomats) left."

Hundreds of police surrounded the building immediately after its seizure, and the country's chief of police threatened to throw the protesters out by force.

Mr. Shafiq had earlier said that German and Bolivian envoys were released at the start of the takeover. It was unclear whether a Canadian diplomat also was inside, as initially reported by Foreign Ministry sources.

The students, many with their faces covered by handkerchiefs, refused to leave until the government agreed to negotiate, and pledged to stay inside the building at least for 24 hours, said a Reuters Television cameraman who gained access to the building after it had been seized.

The students demanded an emergency session of the National Assembly, also known as the parliament, to reopen budget

talks to discuss increased university funding.

"The police are not going to repress anybody," National Police Chief Fernando Caldera told local Radio Ya. "But what might happen is that the police will be obligated to dislodge them."

Foreign Minister Ernesto Leal was not inside the building when the students marched in at 3.20 p.m. Local time (2120 GMT), but later entered in a bid to negotiate with the students.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Claudia Paniagua told Reuters the ambassadors were scheduled to present their credentials to President Violeta Chamorro Wednesday. She did not give their names.

The students "say it's peaceful, but some of them are carrying (homemade) mortars," Ms. Paniagua said in a telephone interview from inside the building.

Representatives of the independent Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights entered the building during the afternoon in an attempt to negotiate with the protesters.

Mrs. Chamorro called a meeting of top officials to discuss how to deal with the ongoing incident, a government spokesman said.

Students have organised occupations of various government buildings including the Central Bank over the past few weeks to press their demands that six per cent of state spending be dedicated to higher education.

On one occasion last December, police opened fire on students trying to invade the National Assembly, killing two and injuring dozens.

IAEA sees little progress over North Korea nuclear inspection

VIENNA (R) — North Korea has so far refused to give the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog agency free access to all its declared nuclear facilities, an agency spokesman said Tuesday.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Pyongyang had given the green light to inspections of three small locations linked to its nuclear industry but not the most important sites.

"My understanding... is that on the central issue concerning those facilities and materials under the freeze, little progress was achieved," a spokesman for the IAEA told Reuters.

Under a 1994 agreement with the United States, North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear programme, including the building of two large graphite-moderated reactors which would have produced large amounts of plutonium.

The West feared Pyongyang's nuclear drive was aimed more at producing a primitive nuclear bomb than providing sufficient power for the needs of its civilians and industry.

The 1994 deal led to the setting up of a U.S., South Korean and Japanese consortium which plans to construct two modern light-water nuclear reactors and supply North Korea with crude oil until the projects are complete.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Tuesday the Vienna-based IAEA could carry out routine and ad hoc inspections of its "unfrozen" nuclear facilities.

"The ability for us to look at the non-frozen facilities... was something that was already agreed," the agency spokesman said.

"The inspection of its reprocessing facility, the equipment and methods we can use,

and our role regarding the spent fuel — there was little progress to register there despite a visit of our five-member team for a week," he added.

Relations between Pyongyang and the U.N. nuclear body plummeted in 1993 when IAEA inspectors reported a discrepancy between the amount of nuclear material it estimated was in North Korea and how much Pyongyang was admitting to.

The report shook Washington and its Asian allies who suspected the missing plutonium was destined for a secret nuclear device.

The IAEA piled pressure on North Korea to allow its experts to check fuel rods in the Stalinist state's one operating reactor, which the agency believed held the key to the mystery.

Pyongyang refused, sparking an international crisis which put the North and South on a war footing.

The IAEA wants to be present when the fuel rods, in a cooling pond for the past 18 months, are extracted and sealed in dry storage.

"We wanted to be there in order to exercise our right to know what is going on... But there was no resolution to the problem," the spokesman said.

The United States wants the uranium rods to be stored as soon as possible and a U.S. commercial company will be assigned to help the North Koreans.

The IAEA is sticking to its guns over inspections of North Korea's non-declared nuclear sites, where evidence of Pyongyang's bomb-making ambitions were believed to lie.

But under the 1994 agreement, the agency has no chance of checking the sites until the light-water reactors are built, possibly in five years' time.

Scientists convinced once there was life on Mars

LONDON (R) — Scientists who believe life once existed on Mars said Tuesday that tiny organisms might still thrive deep below the surface of the red planet.

"The more we learn about the extreme conditions on Earth where life exists, the more I think it is likely that there was once life on Mars," Professor Paul Davies of the University of Adelaide in South Australia told reporters.

Academics originally believed the arid surface of Mars, a wind-swept, dusty lava plain bathed in ultraviolet radiation, was too inhospitable to have supported life.

But speculation about life on Mars, the fourth planet from the sun in the solar system and about 142 million miles (228 million kilometres) beyond Earth, was revived after the discovery on Earth of organisms which did not need the sun's heat for sustenance, preferring to live in volcanic hot springs.

Prof. Davies was speaking at a conference of London-based scientific Ciba Foundation this week where some scientists plan to argue that it was possible life on Earth developed from spores carried through space on meteorites from Mars.

In December this year a U.S. probe dubbed Mars Pathfinder will be launched to look once more for life on the planet, 20 years after the Viking Probe failed in the same mission.

The Pathfinder, due to land in July, 1997, and return to Earth in 2005, will be looking for fossilised remains of life forms which might have lived some 3.8 billion years ago when liquid water existed on the surface of Mars.

U.N. rights investigator criticises Pakistan's laws

GENEVA (R) — A United Nations human rights investigator said Tuesday that Pakistan's laws encouraged intolerance against religious minorities and urged Islamabad to draft "new, more just legislation" for all citizens.

Abdul Fattah Amor, a Tunisian who serves as U.N. special rapporteur on religious intolerance, specifically urged Pakistan to modify its legislation on blasphemy as the death sentence appeared to be "disproportionate and even unacceptable."

Mr. Amor's 23-page report, based on a mission last June, was the first by a U.N. human rights investigator to Pakistan. He examined the situation of Christians, Hindus and Ahmadis there. He urged the Islamic state's authorities to ensure that ordinances for crimes such as adultery and alcohol consumption were compatible with human rights, and requested that they not be applied against non-Muslims. He also called for religious identification to be removed from passports.

Mr. Amor encouraged the government to stem religious extremism and to "take appropriate measures in conformity with law."

"The special rapporteur... considers that the country's current legislation applicable to religious minorities... is of a nature to encourage intolerance or to develop it in the heart of society," Mr. Amor wrote.

Legislation applicable specifically to the Ahmadi minority, a banned Islamic sect, was "particularly questionable and even frankly objectionable," according to the U.N. investigator.

Mr. Amor said: "Protecting freedoms of thought and worship is a necessity, while the application of the death sentence

for blasphemy appears disproportionate and even unacceptable, especially as blasphemy often reflects a low level of education and culture which is not ascribable only to the person who blasphemes."

He acknowledged that much of Pakistan's legislation had been inherited from the past, including "periods of dictatorship."

The U.N. investigator also cited allegations that women and young girls, especially members of religious minorities, including Christians and Hindus, were raped and kidnapped "in order to convert them by force to the Muslim religion."

The report forms an appendix to Mr. Amor's main report, issued on Jan. 19. Both will be considered by the U.N. Human Rights Commission which opens its annual meeting in Geneva on March 18.

Rescuers battle to free three trapped South African miners

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Rescuers battled Wednesday to free three miners trapped in a gold mine at Carletonville west of Johannesburg where two mine-workers died Tuesday, a company spokesman said.

It was not known whether the men were still alive. The men were trapped underground after a rockburst shortly before 0700 GMT Tuesday.

The spokesman, who asked not to be named, said rescue operations would be completed at the Blyvooruitzicht Gold Mining Co. Ltd. before blasting would take place. "We can only blast when

we are sure that we won't jeopardise any miners still trapped," he said. "Last night two more men were rescued and rescue teams recovered another body. This brings the death toll to two. Production has resumed in all areas except the area which was affected by the accident," he added.

The rockburst was triggered by a seismic event. So far 11 miners have been rescued. The mine, owned by Randgold and Exploration Co. Ltd., produced 918 kilograms of underground gold and 131 kilograms of surface output in the three months to Dec. 31.

Accidents claimed 467 lives in South African mines belonging to the Chamber of Mines in the first 11 months of 1995, with 394 of the fatalities in gold mines. In one of the country's worst mine disasters, 104 miners were killed in May last year at Vaal Reef's Gold Mine near Orkney 150 kilometres southwest of Johannesburg when a runaway underground train crashed down a lift shaft killing the men in their lift cage.

More than 69,000 miners were killed and a million injured in mining accidents in South Africa from 1911 to 1994.

Diana denies seeking quick divorce

LONDON (R) — Britain's Princess Diana denied a newspaper report Tuesday saying she was seeking a quick and easy divorce from her estranged husband Prince Charles. Her lawyer Anthony Julius said the story in the Daily Mirror newspaper was "utter rubbish". "The situation has not changed and no decisions have been taken. The princess has been given time by Buckingham Palace to consider her position and this she is still doing. She is not under any pressure," he told the Evening Standard newspaper. Queen Elizabeth urged the warring couple to seek a divorce in December after Princess Diana gave a television interview in which she admitted being unfaithful to her husband and cast doubt over his ability to be king. The tabloid Daily Mirror said the 34-year-old princess, who has been separated from the heir to the throne for more than two years, gave the assessment of her divorce proceedings during a lunch hosted by the Association of American Correspondents in London Monday. It quoted her as saying the divorce proceedings were going well and she expected no problems with access to her sons Prince William, 13, and 11-year-old Prince Harry. But Mr. Julius said the claims in the newspaper were false. "I have no idea where it got this nonsense from but it is all untrue," he added. Lawyers for the couple are working on a divorce settlement but no final decisions have been taken, Mr. Julius added.

Surgeons find cutlery in patient's stomach

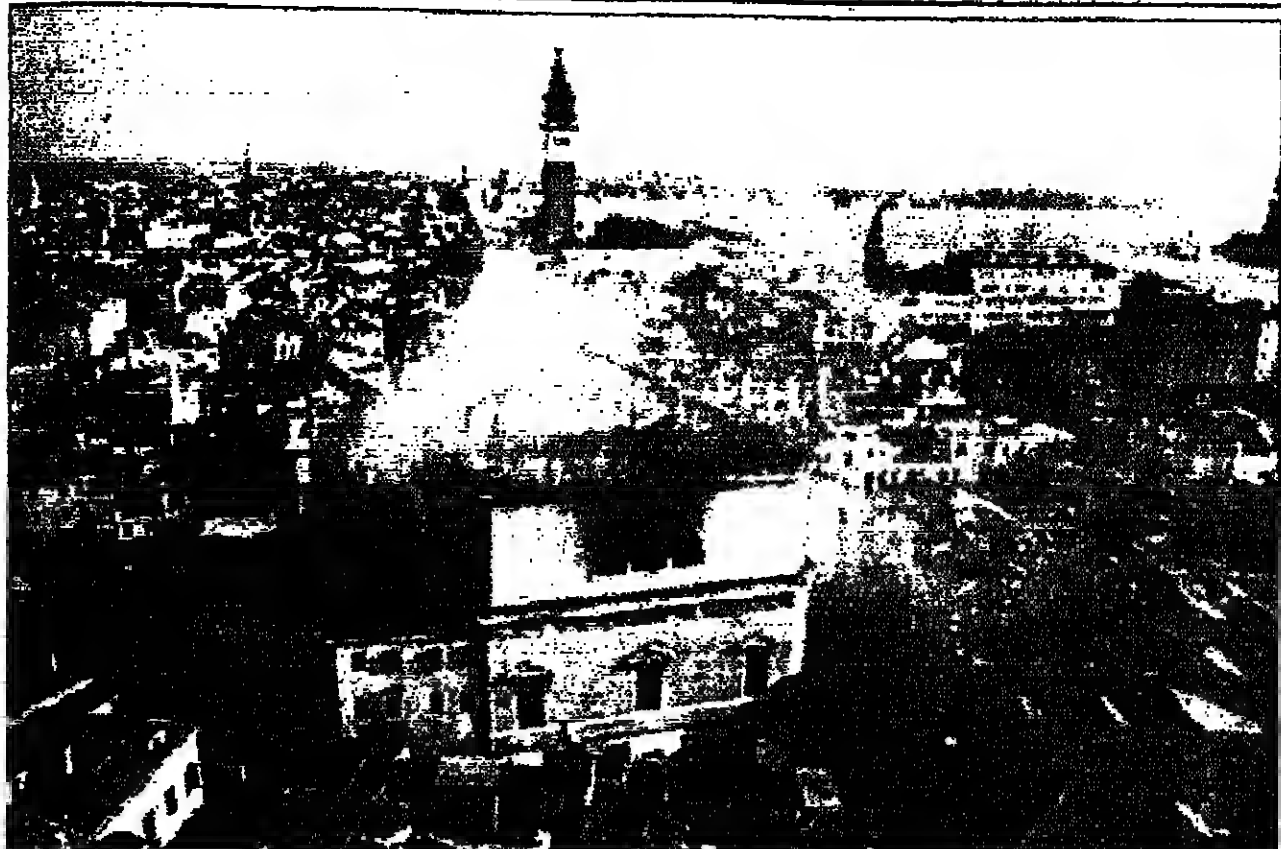
JAKARTA (AFP) — A team of surgeons at a state hospital in Bali have found various objects, including cutlery, a pen and a toothbrush inside the stomach of patient with mental problems, press reports said Wednesday. The surgeons of the state hospital in Denpasar, Bali, Tuesday found the stomach of patient Wayan Sudarsa, 28, contained a spoon, a fork, a toothbrush, a fountain pen, part of an iron bar, a piece of leather, and segments of bamboo and sugar cane.

'Policeman of the Year' held with drugs

MEXICO CITY (R) — An agent voted "Policeman of the Year" in a northern Mexican state has been arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking after being detained with 436 pounds (198 kg) of marijuana, the Televisa television network reported. It said Jose Armando Cruz Gutierrez was voted Policeman of the Year just two months ago by colleagues in the Chihuahua State Detective Force who gave him a new car as a prize. The attorney-general's office confirmed Mr. Cruz's arrest, adding in a statement that three other policemen were detained with him including Chihuahua state detective police Commander Gerardo Maximiliano Coronel and his wife.

Nureyev, Fonteyn ballet shoes sold at auction

LONDON (R) — Ballet shoes worn by the world's most celebrated ballet partnership, Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn, were sold for £1,438 (\$2,168) at a London auction. The two pairs of satin slippers were sold by a former theatre dresser, who was given them in 1963 by a friend who worked at the Royal Opera House where Fonteyn and Nureyev danced. Russian-born Nureyev died in 1993, two years after Fonteyn who was nearly 20 years his senior. She had continued to dance until 1979, when she was 60 years old.



The world famous Venice Opera House in Venice smoulders following a blaze which reduced the landmark building to a hulk (Reuters photo)

Venice, icon of fading beauty, mourns opera loss

VENICE, Italy (R) — Venice Tuesday mourned the loss of its world-famous Venice Opera House as the fire which reduced it to smouldering rubble highlighted the permanent threat of disaster in the fragile lagoon city.

"Venice is dying and this was the coup de grace," one Venetian resident, in tears, told Italian Radio.

International messages of support and pledges of aid, including the offer of a fund-raising concert by opera superstar Luciano Pavarotti, poured in to help the 15th century landmark rise from the ashes like the Phoenix after which it was named.

Officials launched two inquiries into the cause of the fire, which ripped through the theatre Monday night, burned for nine hours and left only four black walls standing precariously.

But there was outcry, too, that only one helicopter had been on hand to tackle the blaze, despite a nearby U.S. air base.

Officials praised the all-night efforts of firemen, who had to trail through narrow streets on foot as two adjacent canals had been drained for dredging for the first time in 40 years.

The theatre had been closed for restoration and news reports said a short-circuit may have started the blaze.

The Fenice, described by Conductor Daniel Oren as "a diamond set in a jewel of a city", has been haunted by fire for 200 years.

Built in 1792 on the site of another building wrecked by fire, it burned to the ground in 1836. Its archives, containing librettos from such famed operas as Verdi's La Traviata and Rigoletto, were moved last century shortly before another blaze gutted the municipal building where they had been housed.

Venice itself, a city of canals criss-crossing 117 tiny islands, has been in peril for centuries. Although it is built on water, the city has no fixed fire hydrants.

"This city is built entirely of wood," Venice Fire Chief Alfio Pini said. "It's a city where you can't move around except by the canals, which are sometimes navigable and sometimes not. We have been saying for ages this city is at very great risk."

Fire tore through the heart of Venice in 1149, destroying 23 churches. The Doge's Palace, former official residence of the chief magistrate of the Venetian Republic, was damaged by serious fires in the 12th, 15th and 16th centuries.

The city, which suffered a devastating flood in 1966, is also prey to high tides and pollution from mainland industries.

Antonio Paolucci, Italy's cultural heritage minister, said the government had pledged an initial 20 billion lire (\$12.5 million) to help rebuild the Fenice, which he called "the last gift the Venetian Republic made to the world".

Giuseppe Cristofolini, a professor of restoration at Venice University, said damage could total 500 billion lire (\$310 million) for which an international appeal would be needed.

The European Commission immediately offered 100,000 European Currency Units (\$125,000) in emergency aid.

Mayor Massimo Cacciari opened a bank account for well-wishers to donate cash to the reconstruction effort and Pavarotti pledged his help. "I will be very willing to do a concert, for free," the tenor told British Television.

The Spanish city of Barcelona sent sympathy — the blaze struck two days before the second anniversary of a fire which gutted its own Liceo Opera House.

Regional Councillor Cesare Campa said the aim was to rebuild the Fenice "like it was before, where it was before, and even though I think it will be difficult, better than it was before — but definitely with better safety precautions."

Kim Jong-Il delays succession because of strength, not weakness — defector

SEOUL (AFP) — One of the main reasons that Kim Jong-Il has not assumed the official titles held by his deceased father Kim Il-Sung is that it would weaken his power, a North Korean defector said here Wednesday.

Ahn Young-Gil, a former army captain who defected to the South in October last year, said the junior Kim's current position in the ruling Workers' Party gives him "more effective power" than the highest but rather titular posts would allow him.

Kim Jong-Il is the organising secretary of the party, a post which gives it holder rights to name or sack the prime minister and other key power holders, Mr. Ahn noted.

Kim Jong-Il, who turns 54 on Feb. 16, has yet to don the two prominent titles held by Kim Il-Sung before his death in July 1994 — those of state president and party general secretary.

Should Kim Jong-Il take them over, it would leave him with the intricate question of who should succeed him in the post of organising secretary.

"I think he has been in agency over who should take over his post," Mr. Ahn told journalists.

Mr. Kim Jong-Il is also the only living member of the party Political Bureau Presidium following the deaths of his father and former People's Armed Forces Minister O Jin-U.

The junior Kim is also supreme commander of the Korean People's Army and chairman of the National Defence Committee.

Mr. Ahn also said Kim Jong-Il was touted in the North as being loyal to his ancestors, a paramount virtue in a traditional Korea, and respectful to first-generation revolutionaries, including his father.

A slogan in the North says, "The great leader Kim Il-Sung will be with us forever," he said.

"There is a possibility that the posts of state president and party secretary general will remain empty but still in the name of Kim Il-Sung for a long time, and Kim Jong-Il will seek to govern through other means," he said.

North Korean officials and diplomats have long dismissed speculation in the West and South Korea that the 18-month delay might be an indication that Kim Jong-Il faced opposition in ascending to his father's posts, or that he could be ill.

But they have hinted recently that the junior Kim might take over the mantle after North Korea ends the traditional two-year mourning period for the dead.

In a separate development, hundreds of North Koreans who have escaped their impoverished homeland are waiting in China and Russia for permission to seek asylum in South Korea, a press report said in China Wednesday.

"As of December last year, the number of North Koreans living in hiding in China and Russia is estimated at 1,000," the conservative Kookmin Daily quoted an official as saying.

Clinton claims 'remarkable consistency' in his term

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton, in an interview published in Wednesday's Washington Post, claimed his record in office showed "remarkable consistency," and distanced his reelection bid from the Democrats' hopes of recapturing Congress.

Asked if the core message in his State of the Union address last week — that the era of big government was over — clashed with his idea three years earlier that government had to do more, Mr. Clinton flushed and rejected the premise.

He said the two speeches were inconsistent only if taken in the context of "selective quotes."

"I've worked very hard to work out a coherent philosophy that is different from either just letting the market run the world and America, or pretending that the government can solve all the problems," he said.

"I have worked on it very hard for years and years and I believe that there's a remarkable consistency in what we have done," he added.

"I believe I've given the American people a coherent view of the world. Just because I'm not for big government doesn't mean I think we should have a weak government or that there's nothing for government to do," Mr. Clinton said.

After his Jan. 23 speech, in which he embraced many of the limited-government themes sounded by congressional Republicans, Mr. Clinton's approval ratings jumped in the polls and he overtook Senator Robert Dole, the top Republican's contender.

Shan independence struggle in Burma to continue without Khun Sa

BANGKOK (AFP) — Ethnic Shan groups will continue the struggle for an independent state in eastern Burma abandoned by the opium warlord Khun Sa, Shan sources said Wednesday.

"The Shan State National Army (SSNA) has about 8,000 troops including runaways from Khun Sa, and the SSA (Shan State Army) has about 4,000 troops, so they have about 12,000 men altogether," a Shan source said by telephone from the Thai province of Chiang Mai. The figures could not be confirmed, but roughly matched estimates from other Shan sources.

Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA) — said to have controlled half the heroin coming out of the Golden Triangle region of Burma, Laos and Thailand — surrendered to Burmese troops in a series of ceremonies early in January.

U.N. and Western anti-narcotics officials in Bangkok said the effects of Khun Sa's surrender on the drug trade would not be certain for several months, but that supply might not be affected since the farmers

were not under the control of any one group.

The MTA was believed to have about 20,000 troops under arms last year before a breakaway group led by Kan Yod accused Khun Sa of favouring ethnic Chinese over Shan leaders and pursuing drug money more vigorously than Shan political goals.

Khun Sa, who is believed to be half Chinese, may have arranged the surrender of the MTA in return for a peaceful retirement, according to Thai and foreign observers here.

Kan Yod had about 3,000 fighters when he formed the SSNA late last year. This climbed to about 6,000 by the time Khun Sa surrendered as former MTA troops crossed to his side in groups of a few hundred at a time, the source said.

The SSNA's strength rose further as surrendering MTA soldiers, given money and promised a ride home, were taken as forced labourers to build a new road to their former headquarters at Hlo Mong, another Shan source said.

U.K. sticks to N. Irish poll plan

LONDON (Agencies) — Britain Tuesday bluntly rejected demands from Sinn Féin, the Irish republican army's (IRA) political arm, that it scrap a proposal for elections in Northern Ireland in favour of immediate all-party peace talks.

"No, the answer to that is no," Britain's minister for the province, Sir Patrick Mayhew, told reporters in Belfast after talks with Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams to try to calm nationalist anger over Britain's election proposal.

Mr. Adams said he told Sir Patrick Sinn Féin was "implacably opposed" to the idea, which it sees as a further device by London to stall the group's involvement in talks aimed at turning 17-month truces by rival guerrilla groups into a permanent peace.

In the 75-minute meeting Mr. Adams also said it was unrealistic to expect the IRA to hand in its huge arms caches before talks.

London says the guerrillas, who fought for 25 years over the future of the British-ruled province, must disarm to prove their commitment to peace.

"The only way to clarify this from the British government's point of view is for (Prime Minister) John Major to publicly retract on the election diversion... and also to publicly drop his preconditions for an IRA surrender of weapons," Mr. Adams said.

In London, Mr. Major himself tried to overcome the opposition of influential moderate Catholic leader John Hume in a 90-minute meeting at the House of Commons.

An unusually tight-lipped Hume, leader of the moderate Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party, said later that his views had not changed as a result of the "intensive" exchange but that he would meet Mr. Major again soon.

"We now believe we're engaged in a process with the prime minister which we hope will lead to the outcome of a common approach to a comprehensive negotiated peace settlement," he told reporters.

Mr. Hume said they did not discuss the murder in Belfast earlier Tuesday of a senior nationalist leader, Gino Gallagher, said by security forces to be "chief of staff" of the outlawed Irish National Liberation Army (INLA).

Gallagher was shot many times at point blank range as he entered a welfare office in a Catholic area of West Belfast, but security sources said they did not regard the killing as a breach of the ceasefires in the province.

Police said they would investigate whether the shooting was part of a feud within the INLA, which has had a history of bloody infighting throughout its 20-year existence.

Britain says that since the banned IRA and Protestant loyalists refuse to bow to its demand for a weapons handover before talks, an election might be an alternative way to create a climate for progress on the impasse.

Sir Patrick assured the pro-Irish Catholic minority that elections would not herald a return to one-party rule by the Protestant majority, who held sway in the old stormont parliament near Belfast until London abolished it in 1972.

"It is (an) election to the talks process. We don't envisage an assembly or anything with legislative, administrative or executive powers," he said.

The election proposal, unveiled last week, provoked the fury of the Irish government, which accused Mr. Major of breaching a joint peace strategy launched in December 1993.

Ireland wants Britain to take up a proposal from a U.S. mediation team for all-party talks alongside the gradual scrapping of guerrilla arms stockpiles.

Mr. Adams traveled to the United States Wednesday to drum up opposition to the proposal, two days after Britain's Junior Northern Ireland Minister Michael Antram arrived to lobby for the plan.

Leaders of the Irish republican socialist party (IRSP), the INLA's political wing, said the murder of Gallagher was political and suited several anti-left wing groups, including British intelligence.

Spokesman Kevin McQuillan declined to say who he believed had killed Gallagher but said reports of an internal INLA dispute were "rubbish."

"I think there are obviously those, including the British intelligence services, who were very concerned about the rising profile and influence of the IRSP within nationalist working class areas," he told reporters at the party's Belfast offices.

British security sources said they did not regard the killing as a breach of 18-month-old guerrilla ceasefires by anti-British Republicans and their pro-British Protestant loyalist foes who fought for 25 years over the future of Northern Ireland.

Mr. McQuillan said Protestant guerrillas had denied responsibility.

Fearing the killers might strike again, he said: "We are very concerned about the safety of the senior members of our own organisation."

Mr. McQuillan said Gallagher, a prominent figure in the tiny party, was killed to try to thwart its growth.

Belfast Police Commander Bill Stewart said detectives were probing several possible motives. "There are strong indications that this is part of an internal INLA feud," he said.

Gallagher became "chief of staff" of the Republican group last March after Irish Police arrested a key member in Dublin, British security sources told BBC Radio.

The INLA, which won notoriety in 1979 when it killed prominent British Parliamentarian Airey Neave, had a history of bloody infighting throughout 20-year existence.

Although it suspended anti-British military operations after the IRA declared its truce 18 months ago, it has not officially proclaimed a ceasefire.

Australian conservatives court green vote

CANBERRA (R) — Australia's conservative opposition Wednesday courted the green vote it needs to end Labour's 13 years in power, pledging to create a huge fund to clean up and protect the country's rivers, beaches and forests.

Opposition leader John Howard, who faces Labour Prime Minister Paul Keating in elections on March 2 and commands a hefty opinion poll lead, said he would set up a 1 billion Australian dollar (\$740 million) fund for spending on the environment.

"It is becoming increasingly obvious that we have reached the point where unless concerted national action is taken to protect our natural environment, Australia's reputation as a clean and green nation may be severely compromised," Mr. Howard said.

Money would be spent to keep pollution off Australia's once pristine city beaches, to clean up huge tracts of now-useless eroded farmland and its largest river system.

He said the fund would be paid for from the proceeds of the sale of a third of telecommunications firm, Telstra Corp.

"Vast tracts of Australia are being affected by rising water tables, salinity, soil erosion, noxious weeds and feral animals," Mr. Howard said.

In previous elections the opposition coalition of the conservative Liberal and National parties has avoided promises to spend large amounts of money on the environment, focusing instead on tax reform and economic growth.

But this time Mr. Howard and his coalition have gone out of their way to woo the crucial green vote, particularly in farming areas and smaller provincial cities.

Under Australia's preferential voting system, voters for small parties like the greens direct their votes to the major parties if the small party does not win the seat.

This system of distributing preferences means that small party voters can often decide the result in marginal seats.

This election is expected to be won or lost in the rural and provincial areas where Labour holds many marginal seats and green issues are a big factor.

Green voters have become increasingly disillusioned with Labour in recent years, particularly a policy allowing the woodchipping of old trees for export.

Mr. Howard, who launched the policy in a small town in the foothills of Melbourne, has been careful throughout the election campaign not to alienate any interest group with promises of major reform or pain.

This is in sharp contrast to the coalition's platform going into the 1993 election, when it promised a consumption tax and major reforms of the industrial relations and health systems.

In 1993 Mr. Keating successfully portrayed the con-

servatives as right-wing ideologues promising painful reform and overcame a hefty opinion poll deficit to win with an increased majority.

This time, however, he has to peg back the opposition's eight percentage point lead in opinion polls without truly controversial policies to attack.

Mr. Howard needs only seven seats in the 148-seat House of Representatives to gain power, and a national swing of 0.5 per cent or less would deliver them to him.

Mr. Howard's green plan, not by criticising its environmental credentials, but by attacking its funding method.

"This is what the coalition is about, squandering Telstra to pay for their election promises," Mr. Keating unveiled his own plan to spend almost 500 million Australian Dollars (\$370 million) on the environment last week.

Congress says no question of Rao's resignation

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian opposition parties demanded the immediate resignation of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao Wednesday after the Supreme Court ordered a wider probe into a bribery scandal that has shaken the country.

The ruling Congress (I) Party has rejected the opposition demand saying that Mr. Rao was "not under a cloud" in the scandal.

The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party said the comprehensive investigation demanded by the court would only be possible if Mr. Rao, who has also been implicated in the scandal, stepped down.

"The prime minister has lost his moral authority to continue," BJP spokeswoman Susha Swaraj said. "He must quit forthwith."

The demand was backed by the centrist Janata Dal (People's Party) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the country's dominant left-wing group.

"The continuance of the prime minister both as a prime minister and president of the Congress (I) Party is legally, morally and politically right," party spokesman Vithal Gadgil told journalists here.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court ordered federal detectives to widen their investigation into the 20-million-dollar scandal that has claimed the names of 115 politicians and bureaucrats who allegedly accepted bribes from him between 1988 and 1991.

Only 10 politicians have been charged so far. The BJP has alleged that Mr. Jain also paid money to Mr. Rao although his name does not figure in the diary. Both the ruling Congress (I) Party and the government have denied the charge.

Newspapers said the Supreme Court directive would force the CBI to launch a probe against Mr. Rao. The CBI had said it could not proceed simply on the basis of Mr. Jain's oral statement that he also gave money to the prime minister.

The BJP's Swaraj said the Supreme Court order was "a direct consequence of the CBI's public relations exercise to play down the allegations against the prime minister in the case."

Ram Vilas Paswan of the Janata Dal said the CBI, which is under the control of the prime minister, would not be able to conduct "a conduct free and fair investigation" unless Mr. Rao quit.

"The CBI is not under pressure from anyone. The Supreme Court is monitoring the scandal and no one should worry about any pressure," Mr. Gadgil said.

Mr. Rao's Congress Party, which is expected to do badly in the coming polls, has previously rejected demands for his resignation over the scandal.

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Myth shattered by AIDS

THE VIOLENT demonstrations by Ethiopian Jews in Israel a few days ago in protest over the decision of health authorities to discard their blood donations, for fear they contained the virus causing the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), deals a heavy blow to the myth that the Jewish state is free of racism even against fellow Jews. The long-practised discrimination in Israel against Oriental Jews has already taken a heavy toll on the Jewish state's protestation that it is immune from discriminatory practices on ethnic grounds. Israel's claim to enjoy the only viable democracy in the Middle East and a clean record on human rights thus becomes suspect against such background. No matter what the law in any country says about upholding human rights, it is the actions and practices on the official as well as the private level that count most.

It would be remembered that the Falashas in Israel have not only been demonstrating against the abject discrimination against their blood but also about all other manifestation of racism against them. When even the children of the "lost tribes of Israel," who were "rescued from their original homeland to enjoy the fine Jewish life" in Israel in two spectacular air lifts in 1985 and 1991 are discriminated against in schools and playgrounds because of the colour of their skin, then there is something terribly wrong with the way the Israelis behave towards each other, let alone towards others. And when the grievances of the Ethiopian Jews do not end there either and reach all other levels and dimensions, then it is time that the government as well as the people started a fresh campaign against wrong policies and practices. Unemployment among "black Jews," for example, runs as high as 20 per cent compared to the national average of eight per cent. This fact paints a gloomy picture of how Israel and its white European people treat others politically, socially and economically. "Dark skinned Jews," so it seems, are segregated in every sense of the word and treated less humanly than second class citizens, a status already earmarked for Jews coming from North Africa and the Arab countries in the Middle East. In the final analysis, Ethiopian Israelis are de facto third class citizens. On the other hand Ashkenazi Jews continue to enjoy a privileged status on every level politically, socially and economically.

We cannot expect Israel to start treating its Arab citizens and the other Arab nationals living in its neighbouring countries fairly and in accordance with international norms as long as it treats its own people in a racist manner. If the Falashas have a problem with their blood, the least that they are entitled to is an honest examination of their donated blood before it is thrown into the trash cans. They have been lured into Israel to find freedom and equal treatment. What they have discovered is an altogether different truth.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

YASSER ZAATREH, a columnist for Al Dustour, criticised the Palestinian leadership for giving so many concessions to Israel without receiving anything in return. The Palestine National Council (PNC) which has been called to convene and take a decision on scrapping chapters in the Palestine charter calling for the destruction of Israel should refrain from doing that, and should instead demand the release of all detainees, numbering about 5,000 and termination of Jewish settlements in Arab lands. Accusing the PNA of failing to help the Palestinian people fulfill their national aspirations because of the concessions it has made since the Madrid conference, the writer said that what the Palestinian leadership is planning to do about the national charter is so humiliating to the Palestinian people who have not yet achieved independence or sovereignty on Palestinian land. The writer demanded that the PNA insist on the repatriation of the refugees, the return of Arab Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty and an end of the Jewish settlements' presence in Palestine in exchange for changing the national charter.

MAHMOUD RIMAWI, a writer for Al Ra'i daily, decried the world community's stand vis-a-vis Eritrea's occupation of Yemeni island in the Red Sea, saying that indifference to the Eritrean aggression on Yemen can only increase tension in this region. Six weeks have passed since the Eritreans occupied Hanish Island but the United Nations has failed to take any step to defuse the crisis which has been left to individual states to handle, noted the writer. The United States, which at first showed concern about the situation and expressed readiness to mediate between the two parties, has now retreated from that position as have the French and the Egyptian mediators who have done nothing to force the Eritreans to give up occupied Arab territory, continued the writer. Condoning the aggression and issuing appeals to the two sides to exercise self-restraint can by no means help solve the problem, said the writer.

The View from Academia

Developing the skill to listen

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

LISTENING, under healthy circumstances, is a virtue and an asset. In the microcosmic world of teaching and learning, and the macrocosmic world of society as a whole, listening is an important skill to develop and master. In uncongential circumstances, however, as the case generally is in our part of the world, it can easily turn into a vice and a problem.

Much can be said about listening as a "skill." First, as teachers and students of languages know very well, listening is an active (not passive) skill and a conscious (not spontaneous) act. Like speaking, reading and writing, it entails complex mental and psychological processes. One cannot, in situations where serious listening is required, be completely comfortable, casual, at ease and lazy and expect one's ear to do the job. A great deal of mental and psychological effort needs to be exerted. Second, good listeners are made, not born. We acquire the ability to listen effectively through training and practice, the way we acquire the ability to speak, read and write effectively and the way we acquire the skill of swimming, cooking, driving and fencing. Third, throughout all the phases of learning and education, but especially during the earlier stages, listening plays a most (if not the most) fundamental role in shaping one's performance and developing one's character. One cannot be a good speaker, reader and writer without being a good listener first.

In our society, listening as a skill is not only largely neglected but it is also most often dealt with in extremely counterproductive and harmful ways.

For one thing, while there is an obvious interest in developing reading, writing and (to a lesser extent) speaking skills at our schools and colleges, there is very little emphasis on developing listening skills per se. Even when some of our schools and universities offer listening courses (most offer none), the courses are not taught by specialists who know what they are precisely after.

For another, most teachers at our schools and colleges tend to confuse listening with silence. Admittedly, our society has recently witnessed the birth of a new breed of teachers — those who do their best to make sure, whenever they speak, that their students are mentally and psychologically involved in the learning situation, who know how to provoke students to contribute to class discussions, who respond to students' interruptions and responses patiently and enthusiastically, and who know when to speak and when to listen. But such teachers are a minority among us. Most are of the old-fashioned type you and I know. They speak non-stop — usually in a loud, monotonous and boring tone, not in the least concerned with what

their students actually feel or think. Students are supposed to listen, they tell you. What "listen" here means is what it means when an abusive parent, husband, elder brother say it in a child, a wife or a sibling — i.e. "shut up." Teaching at many of our schools is still much like preaching at our religious gatherings, speeches at our rallies and lectures at our intellectual functions. You cannot interrupt, you cannot ask, you cannot comment, you cannot move, you cannot breathe. And you are expected to "listen" and be all ears — dead ears, no doubt.

The negative implications of such unfortunate situation are numerous. The first obvious consequence is that students do neither actually listen nor learn how to listen. How can you practise listening, like it or master it when you are exposed in an experience which you find extremely dull, unexciting and unchallenging? Who would concentrate for two, five or ten minutes on a boring sermon, speech, lecture or lesson? Very few people. In this case, how can students "develop" a listening "skill"? Not only is much valuable information lost this way, but the students' ability to follow and concentrate (which is what concerns us here) is wasted and damaged. Since listening is largely a punishment and an act of coercion at our schools and colleges, students simply lose interest in it and eventually hate it.

The biggest challenge for our teachers in the advanced school stages and at higher colleges is to seize the attention of students and keep it focused on whatever material they are discussing with them. You do not blame the students much. Years of mental oppression and coercion lull them into daydreaming or absent-mindedness the minute someone reads or speaks. If you are not careful as a teacher, and if you do not make your class interesting, your students start daydreaming and falling asleep before you know it. Why? Partly because you are not "careful" and your class is not interesting, but also partly because of the Pavlovian, Skinnerian stimulus-and-response thing, the hell-saliva theory. As a result of former teacher-based practices, students are conditioned to sleep the minute they enter the classroom and begin to "listen." I would say that for most of our students (especially those who have gone to public schools) the classroom and the voice of the teacher send them to sleep faster than any sleeping pill. Remember all those great history, geography, maths, Arabic, sociology classes delivered to you as a student in the monotonous ping-pong style?

Second, as a result of poor listening habits, students' comprehension of the ideas and material they are exposed to suffers greatly. Since they do not exert the mental and

psychological effort required, their comprehension, understanding or sense of ideas and issues is at best superficial. As they grow older under the same process of teaching, they may probably become shallow persons — unless the home and peer environment is categorically different. Poor listening results in poor comprehension, which itself results in poor intellectual quality. Shallowness is one of the most obvious vices of our present-day society.

Third, abused listeners turn into abusive speakers, in most cases. There is a great deal of truth in the saying that victims often become victimisers. What do you expect students who have been silenced (out of deference or out of fear) for years to become when they have the chance to speak, say when they themselves become teachers, parents, employers, bosses of sorts, etc.? Chances are most of them will speak non-stop, will not listen to others, and will not allow others to express themselves. It is a vicious circle.

Can you imagine what society is like when people do not listen, when their comprehension is superficial, and when a majority is abusive speakers? Hellish and unbearable no doubt. What kind of dialogue is there going to be under such circumstances? The "dialogue of the deaf," as the Arabic saying goes. The consequences, which many of us experience daily, are too horrible to contemplate. How can our society proceed in the direction we want, how can we conduct business and make "collective" decisions, how can we be fair and just if there is no real dialogue? If the speaker is deaf to the listener and the listener is deaf to the speaker?

The way out, from an educational point of view, is for teachers to introduce the material to students piecemeal. Divide whatever you want to say in any class into smaller points. Introduce each point, by presenting it or (better) by eliciting it from the students themselves through interesting questions and comments; give the students enough time to digest it; ask them to comment on it or to ask about it; and then proceed to the second point, third, fourth, etc. I honestly believe that teachers should speak no more than 2-3 minutes non-stop. This is a simple, basic method but I believe that it does miracles. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the success of many inspiring teachers lies in the fact that they listen as much as they speak, and that they create an atmosphere in class in which students listen and speak.

It is a disaster when teachers become preachers. It is hellish when society does not listen. The victim is the individual, and the victim is the society.

Strange mistrust of Arabs

By Gabi Sheffer

WHEN MYTHS, about Arabs, especially Palestinians, die, there are always those ready to set up new straw men to frustrate the peace and reconciliation processes.

In 1979, when the myth that "Egypt will never sign a peace treaty with Israel" vanished, a new straw man was invented: after Sadat, there will be no peace in the Middle East.

When the myth that King Hussein's position was shaky and that, therefore, he would be the last to sign a peace treaty with Israel was proved wrong, a new straw man was erected: It is true that there is a formal peace treaty with Jordan, but opposition to it is very strong, and Israel shouldn't rely on it.

Now for the myths about

the Palestinians: They are deviant, not serious about peace and reconciliation with Israel; incapable of keeping agreements; inherently inclined to "stab Jews in the back"; unable to maintain a minimal degree of law and order and manage their own affairs; and it's a waste of time for them to run free elections.

When these myths, in turn, were shown to be unfounded, a new straw man appeared: only if and when there is full democracy among Palestinians will Israel be able to trust the agreements with them. And since the Palestinians are inherently incapable of introducing full democracy, Israel should discontinue the peace process. The argument vis-a-vis Syria is similar.

These straw men seem there for no other reason

than to scare Israelis, who live in a constant inexplicable state of mistrust and anxiety about the Arabs. Yet there are neither theoretical nor empirical grounds for the view that the Arabs, particularly the Palestinians, are incapable of establishing democratic regimes.

Democracy cannot develop and mature in societies that are traditional, governed by external colonial rulers, or ruled by local despots. Only the removal of such impediments can pave the way to democracy. Therefore those who argue that because the Palestinians lack democratic institutions and traditions Israel must continue to rule them are moving round and round in circles.

That said, a convergence of internal and external factors can facilitate democracy. In this context, the Arab

states and the Palestinians are feeling the influence of current global and internal processes that encourage the slow emergence of democracy.

They have opened up to closer contacts with the West, and are more connected to the electronic information network, links which contribute to a basic change in attitude. And, like other traditional societies, they are influenced by global economic liberalisation.

This in turn augments the possibility that they will be affected by the new wave of liberalisation and democratisation in the developing world, where societies have rid themselves of the domination of external powers that hampered the emergence of democracy.

And the peace process in our region, encouraging greater openness toward the

"other" is leading to internal change.

The first indicators of economic and political liberalisation are already visible.

Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf states are increasing their contacts with external, mostly Western, markets, and there is a growing interest in encouraging foreign investment. Sooner or later these countries will industrialise.

Industrialisation is bound to transform traditional societies, and, increasing fundamentalism notwithstanding, considerable efforts to liberalise these states are under way.

Here, the Palestinians have great potential. Education is an essential precondition for democracy, and Palestinian society is the best-educated in the Arab Middle East. Traditional

frameworks and institutions are disappearing rapidly; there is a greater openness to democracy, and democratic rhetoric is being freely used. Last but not least, the Palestinians have been strongly influenced by Israel.

Initial, partial and cautious attempts at political liberalisation in Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf states show that some Arab states are undergoing the processes that former authoritarian states like Chile, Taiwan, and South Korea experienced on their path toward democratisation.

The continuation of such processes is the best guarantee for a brighter future in our part of the world.

The writer is professor of political science at the Hebrew University. This article is reprinted from the Jerusalem Post.

New foreign minister wins praise in Russia

By Timothy Heritage
Reuter

MOSCOW — New Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov has won over opposition leaders by signalling a shift away from the West in Russian policy, but has carefully avoided any confrontation with Western governments. Primakov, a former spy chief, has been applauded at home for giving priority to relations with former Soviet republics and making clear he wants to develop ties with the Far and Middle East since his appointment on Jan. 9. But meetings with the French and German foreign ministers also ended with pledges of good faith, indicating the west is ready to give the benefit of the doubt to a man regarded as more conservative than his predecessor, Andrei Kozyrev.

"I like his first steps. The fact he went to Tajikistan and not somewhere in Belgium (on his first trip abroad) shows he understands policy," Alexei Mitrofanov, a nationalist who heads the lower house's geopolitical committee, told Reuters. Other opposition deputies in the state Duma lower

chamber also liked the signal Mr. Primakov sent by choosing to visit Tajikistan, a former Soviet republic in Central Asia, before rushing off to Washington, Bonn or Paris. The fact that he was the clear leader of a high-powered delegation including Defence Minister Pavel Grachev and other top security officials appeared to ease fears that the so-called power ministers might take a major role in foreign policy.

"The fact that he went to Central Asia at the head of a delegation including the power ministers shows that normality is being restored with diplomats doing the talking," said Vladimir Lukin, a leader of the liberal Yabloko movement who heads the Duma's foreign affairs committee. Anatoly Lukyanov, a senior Communist, said he was sure Mr. Primakov would defend Russia's interests and nationalist Sergei Baburin said: "His first steps give cause for hope." The praise for Mr. Primakov is in sharp contrast to the Duma's scorn of Mr. Kozyrev, who was accused by many deputies of being too soft on the West and failing to make Russia's voice heard in particular

over the crisis in former Yugoslavia.

President Boris Yeltsin sacrificed Mr. Kozyrev, a loyal ally, less than a month after the appointment of Mr. Primakov. Western governments fear criticism of him and Russia could upset Mr. Yeltsin's chances of being re-elected in June. Mr. Primakov maintained a jovial mood as he voiced Russia's objections to NATO's plans to expand to include countries of Eastern and Central Europe, which Moscow fears will threaten its security.

This is the same line taken by Mr. Yeltsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, although the latter made clear in a visit to the United States this week that adjustments would be needed. Most analysts already see adjustments in foreign policy whose long-term effects are unpredictable, but believe Mr. Primakov and Mr. Yeltsin had little option but to appease the opposition before the presidential election.

Helsinki in Feb. 10 and 11. The message from the West is clear. Although some officials have said privately they are unhappy at the appointment of Mr. Primakov, Western governments fear criticism of him and Russia could upset Mr. Yeltsin's chances of being re-elected in June.

Mr. Primakov maintained a jovial mood as he voiced Russia's objections to NATO's plans to expand to include countries of Eastern and Central Europe, which Moscow fears will threaten its security. This is the same line taken by Mr. Yeltsin and Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, although the latter made clear in a visit to the United States this week that adjustments would be needed. Most analysts already see adjustments in foreign policy whose long-term effects are unpredictable, but believe Mr. Primakov and Mr. Yeltsin had little option but to appease the opposition before the presidential election.

"So far Primakov has shown he understands what he has to do. He sees what is necessary and politically profitable," said political and military analyst Alexander Kononov.

LETTERS

To the Editor:

Jordan has in recent years witnessed a big leap both in the industrial and the economic fields. The government and the private sector have worked together to achieve this aim. New hospitals have been built, universities, schools and hotels have been founded, all of course to the benefit of Jordanians; nevertheless, an important issue seems to be forgotten: the plight of those who suffer from terminal illnesses such as cancer, Alzheimer disease and multiple sclerosis (MS) who seem to struggle alone in this life.

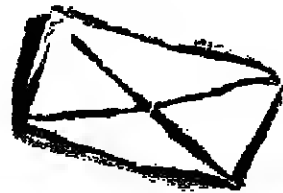
Jordan lacks the facilities where these people can go to when they become helpless and need both physical and psychological, not to mention medical help as it is no easy job, even for those who are dear to us and are willing to help to do so 24 hours a day.

Such specialised places could serve as a hotel a club and a hospital, all in one. The first step towards the establishment of such an important project would be to establish a society, with the help of the government and private associations. By raising funds, the society could familiarise people with these kinds of illnesses and with ways to deal with patients by holding seminars and distributing pamphlets. By issuing a monthly magazine, its members, patients and their families, could communicate with each other and share their pain and experiences that could be mutually beneficial.

I think I am not asking for the impossible, and there is always a beginning.

Suad Alul,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.



Society on the Move

Sizing up some situations for clarity of mind

Former Royal Court Chief, and later Ambassador to the United Nations, Adnan Abu Odeh made a three-day stop-over at home while on his way back to Washington, D.C. from Doha where he was attending a high-powered seminar in the Qatari capital. Mr. Abu Odeh, who began research on a paper on Jordanian-Palestinian relations at the Peace Institute in September, was not here long enough to start yet another round of speculation about his political future, especially now that talk is rife about imminent change in government and other senior positions. He left yesterday, saying all talk about an expected comeback to the palace or the government would prove to be as unfounded as all the previous rumours that he is staging a political return any time soon, if at all. "I need until August to finish my paper," he was heard as saying. "Until then I'll continue the new learning process that I've started, without looking at anything else too seriously. I'm enjoying my stay in Washington."

THE POPULAR POPULAR PARTY: In another learning process of sorts, an official visit to Jordan scheduled by a high-ranking member of Spain's leading political party, Partido Popular (the Popular Party or PP), was postponed because the man in question, Jaime Mayor Oreja, was elected Deputy Secretary General of the party and, as such, was put in charge of fielding candidates for the Jan. 29 deadline for Spain's general elections scheduled on March 3. But still very interested in the mission of his proposed trip, Mr. Oreja, who stands a chance of becoming Spain's next minister of interior should his party sweep to power with presidential candidate José María Aznar at the helm, delegated Basque Parliament member Eugenio Damboriena y Osa to make a private trip to the Kingdom on his behalf. The explicit aim of the trip is to explore what politicians, academicians and other intellectuals here have to say about the peace process, Jordan's relations with Europe, what they expect from Spain and the European Union and other areas of interest to the political leadership in the two regions. The 32-year-old Mr. Damboriena y Osa, who hails from the Atlantic coastal town of San Sebastián, was the guest of honour at an affair, his first ever hosted by Royal Jordanian Vice President for Investments Akel Bilalji. There he had a further opportunity to meet other Jordanian personalities including Jordan's top negotiator or the multilateral talks on refugees Marwan Daudin, Royal Court political analyst Muso Breizat, prominent economics columnist Fahed

Funek, and editor-in-chief of Al Aswat Mustafa Abu Libdeh. Mr. Damboriena y Osa left Wednesday for a one-day tour of Jerusalem with his host and long-time friend Spanish Embassy First Secretary Gustavo de Aristegui. He will leave Jordan on Saturday, virtually with a head-full of new information and experiences to absorb and relate to his party colleagues.

A VIEW FROM THE MIRROR: It appears the daily London-based Middle East Mirror, has run upon hard times, much like the recently rescued Middle East International had, and now is looking for a bail out. The publication, which offers news reports (in English) gleaned from nearly all major Middle East newspapers, including Israeli publications, has issued a plea to its subscribers to help the service acquire additional readers and even donations to help keep it afloat. One response to the appeal was published in a local Arabic daily in the form of a letter pledging support for the Mirror. The signatories in the letter span some of the most prominent personalities at Arabic language newspapers: they include Jihad Al Khazen and Khairullah Khairullah, chief editor and managing editor of Al Hayat, Ghassan Tawineh, publisher of Al Nahar, Othman Al Amir, chief editor of Sharq Al Awsat, Talal Sulman, chief editor of Al Sufir, and Naura Fakhrani, managing editor of Al Majalah. Should the Middle East Mirror crick, the amount of news, analyses and commentaries many public and private information offices in several countries depend on will be significantly more difficult to come by. Subscription rates in the newly "press of a button" service has been considered rather steep, particularly if the delivery is received via fax. So hiking the rate may only make matters worse. We just have to wait and see if having up-to-date information from a wide spectrum of sources and coming under one roof will continue to prove a valuable tool to media and information channels.

THE LEDGER LEGEND: The Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) is looking for a new general manager with the resignation of Derek Ledger as chief executive officer and general manager. Mr. Ledger took on the reins of the RACJ in 1965 when His Majesty King Hussein decreed that the two, then existing auto clubs, the RACJ and the Corring Club, be merged. According to a

close associate, Mr. Ledger always said he would resign at 60, and that he did effective Jan. 2, after 30 years of steering the exclusive club. The RACJ board has since decided that in its search for a new general manager they would require an individual with background in food and beverage service and recreational facilities. It also would separate the motoring division from the authority of the general manager. That division, which is involved in organising rallies and road safety programmes and operating the driving school, will, for the time being, be managed by prominent businessman Hasan Alaeedeen. The club's motor sports committee is chaired by HRH Prince Faisal. Mr. Ledger, who was born in Jerusalem in 1935 when his father was an officer with the British mandate authorities, has been retained through a contract and fee as advisor for international affairs of motor sports and motoring and advisor for water sports in Jordan. According to the RACJ, King Hussein and Prince Faisal requested that Mr. Ledger continue with the club in this capacity. On the drawing board for the club facilities themselves is a plan for a multipurpose recreational area dedicated to the under-18 membership, with table tennis, billiards and other games, plus a lounge. Members, who have petitioned unsuccessfully in the past for additional showers, better food service, earlier pool hours and an indoor pool, may yet see their demands being met, as the board says it is most certainly planning to improve club services. The RACJ stands at about 2,000 family memberships, which when multiplied by the average 4.2 members in a typical club family, brings the membership to nearly 8,500. While the search for a new manager proceeds, Samir Jarar has been appointed as acting general manager.



Derek Ledger

last week, principals of the Four Seasons-Regent Hotels "studied" various locations where they might consider erecting one of their luxury accommodations. Actually, their recent trip was scheduled as a follow-up to earlier discussions on the prospects of entering the Middle East hotel industry market with their eyes on Lebanon and Egypt as well as Jordan. The chain is said to be 25 per cent owned by Saudi Arabia's Prince Al Walid Bin Talal, who is a major shareholder in EuroDisney and Citibank. In the meantime, a new company, the Petra Tourism Investment Company, which has been registered at the Ministry of Trade, is making the proposed hotel its prime interest. Potential investors in the 200-250 room hotel project will, if a yet to be undertaken study proves the project feasible, most likely come from Jordan and other Arab states. The Four Seasons Hotels business was started in 1962 as a private venture in Canada by Isador Sharp. Its Washington, D.C. property at the edge of Georgetown and Foggy Bottom has been a preferred accommodation of Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor for many years. With the merging of major international hotel chains in the last decade, the Four Seasons linked up with the Regent Hotels, a luxury chain well-rooted in the Far East and Southeast Asia. The group's plunge into the Middle East, will be its first.

AMMAN NIGHTS & RAMADAN LIGHTS: With about three more weeks left to Ramadan, folks can enjoy three more Thursdays of "Ramadan Evenings," as dubbed by Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi. Dr. Abbadi says he wants to celebrate Ramadan with the citizens of Amman through a revival of heritage and linking the past and the present, so the municipality prepared a Thursday evenings programme through the holy month which is scheduled to take place in a different location each Thursday until the end of the month of fasting. The after iftar events include various cultural activities, most made to attract the children. Last Thursday celebrations were staged at Hashimieh Plaza in downtown Amman. Tonight, Ashrafyeh's Taj Street will host the festivities. And mark your calendars for Feb. 8 in Shmeisani and Feb. 15 in Jabat Hussein, opposite the Ministry of Health. In store are theatrical plays, religious songs, story-telling, and other activities promising to be fun for the whole family.

Jennifer Hamarnesh

SUPER HOSPITALITY: Scouting about Amman

Demystification of Israel-PLO agreements

The Obstruction Of Peace: The U.S., Israel And The Palestinians
By Naser Aruri
Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1995, 370 pages.

Meticulously researched and brilliantly argued, Naser Aruri's *Obstruction Of Peace: The U.S., Israel And The Palestinians* offers an incisive analysis of the major determining factors in a transparently one-sided U.S. policy in the region, beginning with the creation of Israel in 1948 and ending with the Oslo accords. This is an unbelievably timely book that provides the most thorough examination of U.S. policy towards the Palestinian state from the days of Harry Truman to this day.

The book is composed of three principal parts, each with several sub-sections. The first part deals mainly with the cold war legacy and its durable impact on the Palestinian problem; the second part discusses the process of marginalisation to which the Palestinians have been subjected by successive American administrations; and the third part is devoted to U.S. presidential and congressional electoral politics and its pivotal role in dictating the nearly immutable state of American policy in the Middle East.

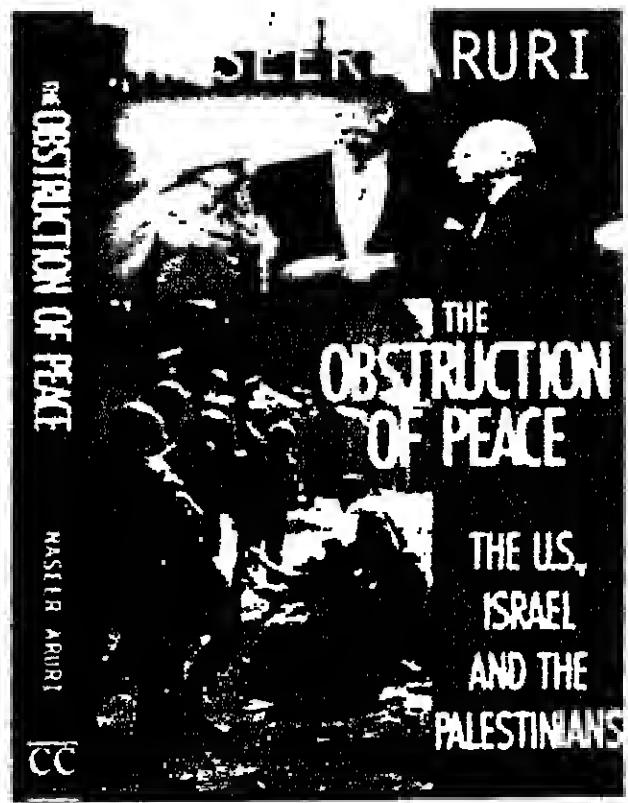
Although the first part serves as an indispensable background for an unclouded understanding of current U.S. policy with regard to the Palestinian question, it is unquestionably the second part that should be required reading for all those who have prematurely jumped on the Palestinian gains at any price bandwagon following the signing of Oslo I on Sept. 13, 1993, and Oslo II on Sept. 28, 1995.

The first part of the book makes it abundantly clear that despite occasional divergences in tactics to allow for shifting circumstances, the U.S. policy towards the Arab region has remained fairly consistent throughout the second half of this century. This policy, simply put, has been predicated on the assumption that "the United States has a title to the Arab World's petroleum resources, a privileged access to its markets and waterways, and an undisputed right to define, contain or roll back the region's enemies, be they internal dissidents, revolutionaries or external aggressors."

Successive administrations, Democratic and Republican alike, have faithfully adhered to this policy and have, albeit each in its own creative terms, reiterated it in such momentous declarations as the Truman Doctrine (1948), the Eisenhower Doctrine (1957), Kennedy's flexible Response, the Johnson Doctrine (1965), the Nixon-Kissinger Doctrine (1969), the Carter Doctrine (1980), and Reagan's Codicil (1981).

Through it all, the U.S. policy objective remained quite strikingly the one spelled out by George Kennan in his Mr. X article (Foreign Affairs, July 1947): Containment of the Soviet Union through military alliances, as well as informal alliances. Under President Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski called the latter "regional influencers", while Alexander Haig tried his hand at what he termed "consensus of strategic concerns" that would stretch from Turkey to Pakistan. Subordinating the Arab-Israeli conflict to the more significant aim of containment of Soviet "expansion," Haig explained to the House Affairs Committee on March 18, 1991: "It is fundamentally important to begin to develop a consensus of strategic concerns throughout the region among Arab and Jew and to be sure that the overriding danger of Soviet inroads is not overlooked."

Like Truman's "mutual security programme", which resulted in the abortive Baghdad Pact, Haig's regional consensus plan did not take off, because it failed to "satisfy



the minimalist position of the Arab component of the strategic consensus." Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war also reflected a similar broad outline of the repeatedly-stated U.S. objective of containment of the "Soviet threat" in the region. In order to achieve that, Kissinger worked on obtaining a political settlement "capable of a transformation of the very nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, a settlement which would remove the conflict from its ideological context and transform it into an ordinary territorial conflict." Aruri explains: "Kissinger devised a settlement which would highlight the global concerns of American policymakers and address the economic and strategic imperatives of American foreign policy, i.e., the steady flow of oil to the West, the security of U.S. investments and trade with the Arab World, the stability of the region, the security of pro-Western conservative regimes, and the maintenance of a strategic military presence."

Another of Kissinger's objectives was to ensure the neutralisation and effective removal of Egypt from the Arab front against Israel, by providing Egypt with a vested interest in stability through economic aid and territorial adjustments. Carter's contribution to this strategy was the "incorporation of Egypt into the constellation of regional powers that would relieve the U.S. of intervention." This policy continued through the Reagan and Bush administrations, with Egypt recently playing a primary role in facilitating and justifying U.S. military intervention in the Gulf crisis. Although the Reagan administration maintained a friendly and close relationship with Egypt, it was its ties with Israel, however, that reached unprecedented heights on all levels. The political, financial, and military support offered by the Reagan administration to Israel will only be matched by the aid level extended by the Clinton administration. The process of the marginalisation of the Palestinian

issue by the Carter, Bush, Reagan, and Clinton administrations was a corollary to the continuation — often deepening — of the "special relationship" between the U.S. and Israel. The more intense the cold war grew, states Aruri, the stronger the special relationship with Israel became: "United States policy continued to erode the centrality of the Palestine question until it was completely relegated to a secondary — if not even tertiary — issue during Reagan's presidency. In fact, during the past quarter of a century, Israel was transformed from a U.S. client, to a surrogate in the 1967 war, to a partner in the 1982 war, to a strategic ally since the war... By the same token, the more dependent the Arab countries became on the United States for regime security and financial stability and the less coherent the Arab position became... the less responsive was the U.S. to their general concerns."

The erosion of official Arab support for the PLO after the Gulf War and George Bush's assertion that the PLO "backed the wrong horse" in the conflict, coupled with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the military and economic dismantling of Iraq, finally helped pave the way for the U.S. implementation of its own partisan vision of peace in the region. Thus an uncertain path was charted for the Palestinians in the Madrid Conference, which was convened in September 1991 and culminated in the dead end of Oslo I and Oslo II. The author explains:

"The negotiations in South Africa were expected to lead to the termination of apartheid and the realisation of majority rule. That has already been realised. In the case of Palestine however, there is neither an outline nor a vision of the final outcome. All fundamental issues involving borders, refugees, Jerusalem and indeed the occupation itself are deferred. 'Self-government,' as the sole concern of these negotiations in the immediate term is seen by the Palestinians as the necessary link towards independence, whereas Israel views the concept only as a mechanism to ratify the occupation under a new and different label."

Many experts, including Aruri, consider the Oslo accords a retreat even from Camp David which, for all its shortcomings, spoke of the military government being "replaced" by the Palestinian authority. The Oslo accords leave no room for such interpretations. As Shimon Peres described it, the PLO role in the West Bank is a "functional extension rather than a territorial extension" of Palestinian rule. Consequently, Palestinian demands for control of traffic over the Jordan River bridge and at the Rafah crossing to the Sinai Peninsula were more in the realm of supplication rather than negotiation. Likewise, the symbolic Palestinian presence at the border — actual control of which, according to Article VIII of the Declaration of Principles, remains Israel's domain — was bestowed gratuitously in deference to a presumed Arab lust for honour and prestige. Therefore, the three-wing terminal at the bridge is managed by an Israeli director, and foreigners and Israelis pass through a separate terminal off limits to Palestinian agents who have joint responsibility only for Palestinians entering the Palestinian wing. Israeli staff, hidden behind two-way windows receive passenger documents from Palestinian agents, scrutinise them, and decide to approve or disapprove entry of Palestinians to Gaza and Jericho. So Cairo III (which was signed on May 4, 1994), like Cairo I and Cairo II before it, is a showcase of make-believe elements of statehood that are devoid of any meaningful substance: Flags; guards with uniforms; immigration officials armed with ineffectual entry stamps; laissez-passes documents with the Arabic inscription "passport"; and Palestinian postal stamps which carry the phrase

BOOK REVIEW

"Palestinian Authority," but are not valid for international use. And, international callers to Jericho and Gaza will use a separate area code, but their calls will go through the Israeli telephone system.

On Aug. 24, 1994, Israel and the PLO signed a fourth major agreement since Oslo I — the Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities in the West Bank, often referred to as the "Early Empowerment." Under this agreement, the five spheres affected by the transfer are education and culture, health, social welfare, tourism and direct taxation. Here is what the author has to say about this arrangement:

"Palestinian responsibility for the management of these spheres will be not only curtailed by 'security' considerations, but also by sovereignty considerations. Autonomous decision-making, therefore, will be excluded in education, health and tourism on security grounds, while taxation authority will have to be shared with Israel for sovereignty reasons. With regard to legislation in the five spheres in which a transfer has been effected, the agreement grants the P.A. 'secondary' authority. Article VII-1 states that 'the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) may promulgate secondary legislation regarding the powers and responsibilities transferred to it.' That legislation, however, must be submitted to Israel for determining whether '...it exceeds the powers and responsibilities transferred to the Palestinian authority' (Article VII-3). In the event that such legislation is declared invalid, the PA can appeal the verdict to the joint legislative subcommittee established under the Gaza-Jericho agreement, which reaches its decisions by 'agreement,' implying to turn an effective Israeli veto."

This agreement, stemming from the DOP and Cairo II, is predicated on the following premises: 1) continuation of the Israeli occupation, thus reinforcing the U.S.-Israeli view that the area is "disputed" not "occupied" territory; 2) consolidation and legitimisation of the apartheid system, with two separate legal standards for the Palestinians and the Israeli settlers — i.e. the agreement empowers Israel to use force to collect land taxes from Palestinians, but forbids the PA from using any force to collect income taxes from Israelis under its jurisdiction; and 3) exemption of Israel from all liabilities, obligations and omissions with regard to acts committed during 28 years of brutal occupation.

Such grievances of financial claims, were they to arise, must be "referred to the Palestinian authority." In the event an award is made against Israel and subsequently paid by Israel, the PA is obligated to "reimburse Israel the full amount of the award." The author comments that apparently when the Palestinians initiated the Declaration at Oslo, their hope was that the spirit of the agreement, as they conceived it, would ultimately overcome disagreements over the letter of it. He concludes that unfortunately this was "a groundless hope which reflects a political naivete, unwarranted optimism, and a garbled knowledge of the constitutional nomenclature."

Naser Aruri has immensely contributed to the demystification of the multiple agreements signed by Israel and the PLO, and thus has managed to lay the groundwork for an enlightened challenge of the propaganda tools employed to cloud understanding of the immeasurable damage done to the Palestinian cause. This is by far the most intelligent analysis of the U.S. historical collusion in the continued disenfranchisement of the Palestinian people. No Palestinian or Arab can afford to overlook this highly significant account — ADC Times.

Khalil Barhoum

Life savers

By Jean-Claude Elias

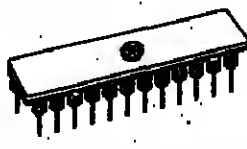
SCREEN SAVERS under Windows have become a must for anyone using Microsoft's computer operating system. At the risk of offending the vast majority of those who are familiar with the subject but to enlighten the half per cent of the population still unaware, let's explain what a screen saver is.

The constant display of images on a CRT (cathode ray tube) screen, like the one inside a regular TV set or a PC monitor, causes normal but slow wear on the screen's coating, which therefore has a limited lifetime and degrades with age. The quality of the coating is directly responsible for the quality of the images. This is why images on your TV look sharper and brighter when the set is new. Whereas moving display does affect the coating, fixed images dramatically accelerate the process and create an additional problem — shadowing or ghosting.

Fixed images displayed on a CRT for a long period of time can damage the coating of the screen much faster than moving pictures. Moreover, the magnetic phenomenon called remanence will leave a fine trace of the fixed picture permanently imprinted on the screen's coating even after the picture is gone, erased from the screen. For instance if you leave a still photograph of Petra's Treasury displayed on your PC monitor for a long time, you may be stuck with a faint, "ghost" or shadow image of this photograph that will be blended with the display of any programme you may use later on, such as word processing, and so on.

The better the quality of the monitor, the less it will be subject to such a problem. The preventive approach however, is not to leave fixed images permanently displayed. Windows has a built-in function that detects the screen movements. If no movements or user actions are registered for a given period of time (typically 3 to 4 minutes, but it's user-programmable), the system automatically, but temporarily, erases the current screen contents and acti-

chip talk



vates moving pictures of its own, reducing the wear of the CRT's coating. When the user takes control again, the original screen contents are restored. These moving pictures are called screen savers.

Windows offers a choice of screen savers that goes from simple "Blank Screen" to "Starfield Simulation" and "Flying Windows." Third party developers (i.e. not Microsoft) have recently designed their own set of screen savers that can be added to Windows. Berkeley Systems have been very successful with their "After Dark" series that proposes anything from realistic fish aquariums (with sound simulation) to crazy games. Their new release, entitled "Totally Twisted" is even crazier and is advertised as "How psycho has the world's No. 1 screen saver gone."

Funny as they can be, and beautiful to look at, eccentric screen savers miss the point — that is to save the screen from excessive wear and shadowing. Actually the only utility that really does a perfect job is the above described Microsoft's "Blank Screen". It is also the fastest, the simplest, and does not take megabytes of precious hard disk storage like After Dark does. If your concern is to protect your monitor from damage, the simplest screen saver is the perfect medicine. If on the other hand you is what you're looking for, go for After Dark.

The raw and the cooked

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

LET ME start off by explaining what it is exactly what I mean by 'the raw and the cooked'. There are, I believe, two kinds of people in this world. The first kind can be said to include people who still have a long way ahead of them in terms of acquiring knowledge for the purposes of the advancement of human lives. And these can be described as "raw". The second kind includes people whose sole aim is to use their knowledge and skills for the betterment of society. These are the "cooked" people of this world.

A strange concept indeed, but a very useful one for comparing two societies, any two groups of people, or even any two people.

First of all, there is a story that has to be told. A story about the differences and similarities between people and places half a world apart. And in order that you be able to understand this story in the context and the spirit in which it was envisaged, we have to start right at the very beginning.

We can begin at a point in time where one person leaves his or her country to pursue a university degree in another country. Life, all of a sudden, becomes about learning how to get along on fairly decent terms with different people, and sometimes from conflicting backgrounds. It becomes about learning to make compromises and about talking your way through anything that you would need to get across.

All this becomes a part of an ongoing process whereby you are out there trying to change the stereotypical ideas that people from, say Europe, have about people from, say the Middle East. And there is no need to elaborate here because the history speaks for itself.

And there can also be no doubt that there is a collective effort running against the historical tide of generalisation and trying hard to make people aware of the intricate mechanisms that make a society such as the Jordanian society tick. Albeit in a rather anarchist manner. A manner

that has deeply rooted within its folds a system of keeping people always occupied with things that are of very little importance to their lives just so that they would spend less time contemplating on the issues that are really important.

This is somewhat besides the point but it just goes to show how deeply we remain set in our traditional ways of thinking. Ways that are at the core of this article.

In England, and quite lately, one rather strange news item has been the story of the 13 year-old girl who has run off to Turkey to wed someone she met on holiday and five years her senior. As a result of this, many people, from civil groups to court judges, have been making quite a big fuss about the whole situation.

And then out of the blue, a picture appears in one of the British papers where the subject is a teenage engagement. This time in Aqaba, Jordan.

Was this a coincidence? I really don't know! One could be rather cynical about the whole matter and say that we, as a people, were being made fun of in the British press or that it was just one of those amusing moments that reporters thought would bring a whole lot of smiles to many droopy faces. Or maybe the intention was just to point out that the Jordanians were, in a manner of speaking, very different from the British in terms of accepting such fanfare. This is after all the 1990s. And if we are advocating a more open society where within the limits of a free culture such actions can be tolerated, then why get furious when something such as a teenage wedding that happens in your society and treat the same issue as a witness to backwardness in another? Of course there is more than one party to blame for this mess.

Parents for one party have a big role to play in instilling in their children the ability to tell apart right from wrong. A role that they have to undertake because our children should not be like machines always waiting to receive instructions. Or should they?

Maybe in the open and free society some rules of conduct will have to be redefined for the sake of avoiding such unnecessary situations in the future.

SPORTS ODDITIES



* WILLIAM WILLIS sailed 6,700 miles from Peru to Samoa in 112 days on a raft consisting of 7 logs lashed together at the age of 61. His only companions were a cat and a parrot — and the cat ate the parrot. (1954)



* NICKY TIRONE, aged 2, hit a baseball over a two-storey building. Brooklyn, New York.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

MOHAMMAD A. SHUQAIR



* JIM LONDOS: Former world's wrestler champion ran a mile with 2 men on his back.

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

** How cruel you are!
Ma aqsa qalbaq!

** I hate the very sight of you.
Ana akrah an-nazor elayk.

** It's unfair of you to act thus.
Innahu ijhaf mika an ta'mal amalan kahatha.

** You must have some decency.
Yanbaghi an yakoon indaka ba'dul hishma.

** You must be ashamed for your laziness and misbehaviour!!

Yajeh an takhjal lema anta alayhi minal kasal wasu'es sulook!!

** How rash you are!
Kam anta motahawir!

** You lack experience and tact.
Tanqusul khithra wal-labaqa.

** May God help you.
Kanal'lahu fee awnika.

JOKES

* A YOUNG woman was asked by a friend what name she was going to give to her new baby son. "Well," she replied, "we thought of calling him David."
"Oh," the other retorted, "I shouldn't. Every Tom, Dick and Harry is called David, nowadays."

* A YOUNG wife remarked to her husband who was lying in bed with his feet on the pillow and head at the foot of the bed: "I can't understand what's come over you, Jack, since you started work at the sardine-packing factory."

* A SON who was at college wrote to his father as fol-

lows: "No mon, no fun, your son."
The father replied in similar vein:
"Too sad, too bad, your dad."

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. What is the Russian equivalent of the American astronaut?
2. What job was an unmarried woman supposed to do in olden times?
3. What do the following have in common — Jackson, Williamson, Jacobson, Harrison, Robinson?
4. In which industry does a checkweighman work?
5. What is the name of the person who stuffs animals?

PUZZLES

1. What are the next two numbers in this series:
1 4 13 28 49 — —
2. What is the next letter in this series:
A D A E A G A I A M A —

Thursday, Feb. 1, 1996

1:00 Fireman Sam
1:10 Disney's Aladdin
1:30 The Legends Of Treasure Islands
2:00 My Secret Identity
2:15 NBA
3:15 The New Leave It To Beaver
3:40 Adventures Of The Old West
4:30 Gillette World Sport Special
5:00 Freoch Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Varieties
Tarata
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Archimede
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Carol And Company
8:00 Magazine 01
8:15 The Album Show
9:10 Pride And Prejudice
10:00 News In English
10:25 A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
10:45 Feature film — Sharpe's Rifles
Starring: Sean Bean & Brian Cox
12:00 Madlock

Friday, Feb. 2, 1996

1:00 The Little Mermaid
1:30 Irish-The Happy Professor
1:45 Bush School
2:00 See How They Grow
2:15 Lift Off
2:35 Super Carrier
3:20 Goldrush In Alaska
4:05 Wonderly Why
4:30 Give Us A Clue
5:00 Freoch Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Film
L'Honneur Des Grandes Neiges
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Allo La Ferre
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Short Story Cinema
8:00 Sea Quest
8:45 America's Funniest People
9:10 Widows (Ep. 5)
10:00 News In English

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

10:25 A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
10:45 Second Chances (Drama)
11:30 Classic Movie — Anna Karenina
Starring: Greta Garbo & Fredric March

Saturday, Feb. 3, 1996

2:00 Moomios
2:30 Wish Kid
3:00 Harry And The Hendersons
3:25 Blue Heelers
4:00 Voyagers
4:00 Documentary
Carre Vert
5:15 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00 Serie
Chateau Valloo
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Paul Pas Rever
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Major Dad
8:00 Stamp Of Greatness
8:25 Hawaii Five-O
9:10 A Fine Romance (Drama Ep 2)
10:00 News In English
10:25 A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
10:45 Feature — "To A Stranger's Hand"
Starring: Robert Ulrich & Megan Gallagher
11:50 Mancuso FBI (Police Drama) Part 2

Sunday, Feb. 4, 1996

2:00 The Flintstones
2:30 Disney's Aladdin
3:00 Family Playhouse
3:30 Islamic History In Jordan
4:00 Voyagers
5:00 Documentary
Azimut
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00 Magazine
Envoye Special
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Sports Et Musique

7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Are You Being Served
8:00 Oriental Rugs
8:25 Hawaii Five-O
9:10 Cinema, Cinema
9:30 Women Of The World
10:00 News In English
10:25 Counterstrike
11:15 The American Chart Show
12:00 Stay Lucky

Monday, Feb. 5, 1996

2:00 Bonkers
2:30 Richie Rich
3:00 Playabout
3:15 Bustin' Loose
3:40 Animals Of The Mediterranean
4:00 Voyagers
5:00 Documentary
Des Plantes Et Des Hommes
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
5:50 Magazine
C'Est Pas Sorcier
6:20 Family Programme
L'Ecole Des Fans
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Cinq Sur Cinq
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 McHale Navy
8:00 Iovendon
8:25 Hawaii Five-O
9:10 Russia — The Missing Years
"History Of The Russian Navy"
10:00 News In English
10:25 A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
10:40 Perfect Scoundrels
11:10 Taurus Rising
12:00 Ellen

Tuesday, Feb. 6, 1996

2:00 Captain Planet
2:30 Jonny Quest
2:50 Spirit Of Adventure

3:40 Scientific Eye
4:30 Voyagers
5:00 Documentary
Montagne
5:15 Children's Programme
Cupido
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00 Medical Magazine
Savoir Plus Sante
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Ushuaia
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Yoo Bet Your Life
8:00 Oriental Rugs
8:25 Hawaii Five-O
9:10 Harry
10:00 News In English
10:25 Three Sovereigns For Sarah
11:15 Feature film — Psycho
Starring: Anthony Perkins & John Gavin

Wednesday, Feb. 7, 1996

2:00 The Flintstones
2:30 Speed Racer
3:00 Islamic History In Jordan
3:30 Islamic Antiquities In Jordan
4:00 Voyagers
5:00 Documentary
Planete En Equasion
5:30 Serie
Les Dame De La Cote
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Sport Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Evening Shade
8:00 Oriental Rugs
8:25 Hawaii Five-O
9:10 Horizon/Too Big, Too Soon
10:00 News In English
10:25 Airwolf
11:20 The Silk Road
12:30 Second Thoughts



Carol Channing performs in Hello Dolly, a role she has performed 4,500 times. Channing won a Tony Award in 1964 for the show and still retains her theatrical, larger than life, presence (Reuters photo)

Offstage, Carol Channing still glows

By Karen Goldfarb
Reuters

NEW YORK — Carol Channing sparkles, high above Broadway.

In her apartment overlooking the Great White Way, the woman who first told the world "diamonds are a girl's best friend" in the hit 1950 musical Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, is still emitting light like a nova exploding.

In this life, she's a musical comedy actress. But on stage and off, she seems a bit of a medium, channeling energies. What she tries to do, always, she says, is connect with the audience.

"I send out the anodes and they send out the cathodes," she told Reuters. "And that's the thrill of it," she said.

At 74, her blonde wig just slightly askew, and her lips a soft bright pink, Channing, dressed elegantly in a white ensemble and French looking high heels, seems theatrical and larger than life but never stagey.

"Come in," she says, in the famous, whiskey and soda voice that is gritty and humorous at the same time, as she opens the door with a flourish.

Those who keep records tell her she has played the part of Dolly Gallagher Levi, the loveable but calculating matchmaker in the hit musical Hello Dolly on and off through the years 4,500 times, but she says she can't believe it. The matinee performance on Jan. 10 marked the occasion and a street was renamed in her honour to Channing Way.

"I guess after the 3,000th, you lose track," she said modestly.

Known for her comic timing and the way she can twist a phrase, Channing won a Tony

Award in 1964 for Hello Dolly, was hailed as "the most fabulous comic creation in this period of history," toured with Mary Martin in Legends, and has appeared in concerts and movies. She said that it is always the show she is in at the moment that most engages her.

She has no favourites. "It's like falling in love," she says, and laughs that throaty laugh.

"It's always the one that you're doing at the moment. It's like being in love — there never was anybody else you were stuck on... Every show I've even been in, I've cried my eyes out when they were over."

After all her experiences, Channing admits, she still gets nervous. It's something she enjoys.

"It's heaven," she said. "It's not agonizing because it's something I know is God given — and I know it's a crystallisation of thought that this total concentration descends on you — and some people call it stage fright."

Touching the audience emotionally is everything to her.

"The whole thing is a big gamble," she said. "We are dealing with human beings — and these human beings are either slow today or fast or giggly or they don't want to laugh or they suddenly find it very profound — once you find them," she said, "it's amazing how we affect each other."

But she said, "I will go to my grave with audiences I felt I didn't reach."

There aren't too many of those. Usually, she brings the house down. Channing admits she gets a standing ovation almost every night, except maybe one time when Jack Benny was in the audience. But he said, to her, "don't worry Carol — you can't hear people smile," or at other times,

she said, "I found out later, they were very old and didn't make much noise and I couldn't hear them."

She glories in the standing ovations.

"I'll tell you what it feels like," she said. "It feels like we are reaching them, and all of us together — the company, me, the audience — we are celebrating the moment."

All that love, though, didn't translate to President Richard Nixon, who put her on his enemies list.

She says she doesn't know why, but thinks it may have something to do with a diamond she was given by Pat Nixon. "Maybe she had it appraised," she said.

Channing, who has missed only one performance of Hello Dolly, in all these years, said her most memorable show was when Jackie Kennedy came with her two children, Caroline and John-John. "He was called that then," she said, almost a year to the day President Kennedy had been shot.

She said she gave Caroline a gift, her big pocketbook from the show, which she carried around with her for weeks, Jackie told her later.

And as for Hello Dolly, the show, based on Thornton Wilder's play The Matchmaker, which she has spent much of her life performing in, she praises its message as wonderfully optimistic. She will go on tour again with it this summer, to Europe and Asia.

"If you insist on surviving — if you must survive and you won't give in and lie down and die because life can dish it out pretty cruel, if you say, 'I'm going to overcome it,'" she said, doing a big Carol Channing gesture, her arms opened wide, "then you're going to make it to the end of the rainbow," she said.

"And that's what it's all about."

Kuwaitis slowly shed post-war gloom

By Inal Ersan
Reuters

KUWAIT — With every wriggle and pout, the glamorous Lebanese singer drew roars of male appreciation.

"I wish your father was my father-in-law" yelled an excited Kuwaiti businessman, as Lebanese starlet Nujwa Karam's rhythmic Arabic love songs worked a concert crowd into a frenzy.

Five years after the Gulf War, Kuwaitis are finally allowing themselves to be seen having some fun as they emerge slowly from an era of national gloom caused by Iraq's 1990-91 occupation.

Karam's concert was the first in five years by a female Arab singer for a fee-paying audience in the small Gulf country.

While famous Arab singers have flown in to perform for the rich in private since the war, an unofficial ban on public celebrations has sought to preserve a degree of public decorum out of respect for relatives of Kuwaitis killed in the crisis.

The pent-up demand for fun that the ban created was on full display just before Karam went on stage at an auditorium.

About a hundred people who had failed to purchase tickets for the sell-out event tried in vain to ram the doors open to join the 1,400 people who had already secured a seat.

During Karam's set, dozens of male fans broke an unwritten post-war taboo by jumping up from their seats to dance.

For some Kuwaitis Karam's visit could not have come a moment too soon. For months commentators had called for a relaxation of austere Gulf Arab norms that govern public entertainment.

Columnist Hassan Al Eissa, giving his impression of Kuwait on his return from vacation in the United States, wrote:

"The whole country has become one big dark spot of boredom, consisting of burning black asphalt, cars driven by badly-behaved people, castle-like houses with no soul or beauty and,

finally, all-male armies of wandering Asian labourers."

"This society can sometimes be so depressing and frustrating that it is very natural to go overseas for two to three weeks to relax," said political scientist Abdul Redha Assiri.

The government, recognising a need for entertainment among families traumatised by war, has built or improved funfairs and a hot-rod race track and permitted the building of a private marine park. Adults also sail and swim and camp in the desert.

But most Kuwaiti men still spend evenings at all-male discussion groups and outings for most women are restricted to coffee mornings, shopping or weddings. Night clubs and bars are banned. Alcohol is forbidden in line with religious norms.

Islamists, whose influence has grown since the war due to their role in the civilian resistance to Iraq's occupation, are campaigning for more curbs on public behaviour, total sexual segregation in education

and tougher censorship of television.

As a result, many Kuwaitis spend their weekends in other Arab states with more relaxed rules such as Lebanon, Oman or the United Arab Emirates, where alcohol and dancing are permitted.

"No one should practice guardianship of anyone. Enemies of fun should know that they have no right to impound joy," wrote liberal columnist Khaled Al Rashed.

But Islamist commentator Saleh Al Rashed said most Kuwaitis were against alcohol or dancing. And the existence of a minority in favour of such things was nothing new, he said.

"Kuwait is a very contradictory society," he told Reuters. "We have very religious people, the ordinary religious, the not very religious and then people who are interested in totally different ways of living. We've always had our differences."

"We do like to have fun, but not in a way that deprives us of our traditional way of life."

Kuwaitis with a taste for Westernised forms of fun admit they are afraid to

show it for fear of upsetting religious conservatives. Some rich folk throw private parties, importing foreign singers, but guests are required to be discreet.

Karam's visit was made possible by a decision by the Information Ministry to permit state leisure firm Touristic Enterprises company to stage concerts by non-resident singers. But many curbs, official or unofficial, remain in place.

Some of the loudest complaints come from hoteliers, who are dismayed to see counterparts at the southern end of the Gulf profit from fun-hungry Kuwaitis weekend away.

Some businessmen have called for Kuwait's Fialaka Island to be made a "fun" zone with no curbs on alcohol or dancing, but Islamists have sworn to thwart any such bid.

After Karam's visit Islamist Mujtamaa magazine urged a fresh clampdown on singing and dancing. "The executive authority's role is weak and fragile in curbing the spread of immoral and Western behaviour," wrote columnist Abdul-Razaq Sham-seddin.

London exhibition reveals Diaghilev — fiery king of ballet

By David Ljunggren
Reuters

LONDON — A new London exhibition provides an intriguing insight into the formative years of Sergei Diaghilev, the flamboyant Russian ballet impresario who swept away the conventional world of dance in the early 20th century.

Diaghilev founded the Ballets Russes dance company in Paris in 1910, which was most famous for the revolutionary works it staged before World War I, many starring legendary male dancer Vaslav Nijinsky.

Diaghilev, born in 1879, succeeded in integrating ballet with the ideals of other art forms such as music, painting and drama. But he only managed to do this after carefully cultivating a remarkable group of artists in Russia.

"His nose for talent was extraordinary, yet he wasn't an artist, a musician, a writer or a designer," said Sir John Drummond, a noted Diaghilev expert who opened the exhibition.

The exhibition traces Diaghilev's friendship with creative spirits such as composer Igor Stravinsky,

painter Isaac Levitan, singer Fyodor Chaliapin as well as artists such as Leon Bakst, Mikhail Vrubel and Natalia Goncharova.

Organisers of the new exhibition at London's Barbican Centre persuaded seven leading St. Petersburg and Moscow museums to lend a wealth of items from Diaghilev's early years in Russia, including drawings, paintings, books, journals and costumes.

"The important material is from the Russian period. First he worked as an art historian, then moved to the opera and only then to ballet," said Jovan Nicholson, who played a key role in negotiating with the Russian museums.

"He was able to bring so much to ballet because he already knew a great deal about dance and music, and he was able to fuse all his talents into one entity."

The exhibition is split over two levels, with later years featured on the ground floor, where actresses walk amongst spectators modelling some of the startling colourful costumes which helped make the Ballets Russes so shocking.

When Diaghilev set up the company he wasted no time

in dynamising the old structures of classical ballet.

Out went the tired choreography and the lengthy three-act works. In came a riot of colour, movement and sound guaranteed to stun audiences and — crucially — designed to inject life back into ballet.

Bakst's overwhelming set designs, some little more than explosions of colour, combined with the choreography of dancer Michel Fokine helped guarantee a string of successes such as The Firebird in 1910 and Petrushka in 1911.

"His sets were three-dimensional. He changed the whole appearance of the theatre and introduced the idea that it should be colourful and exotic, something we've kept since then," Drummond said in an interview.

"The idea of ballet as a serious art form is something he's almost entirely responsible for."

Scholar Milisa Pozhar-skaja wrote of Nijinsky's performance in Petrushka: "Beneath the unprepossessing exterior of the clumsy ranting clown, he revealed a tragic humanity."

As a result, the art of ballet was raised to the power-

fully psychological grotesque.

Diaghilev had a complex character and he broke with many of his acolytes, sometimes brutally. In Nijinsky's diary, which lay hidden for years, the dancer claimed Diaghilev had seduced him.

But in the master's eyes everything was permissible as long as it furthered his artistic ideal.

"I am first a great charlatan, though with dash, second a great charmer, third, cheeky, fourth a person with a lot of logic and few principles and fifth, someone afflicted, it seems, with complete absence of talent."

"I think I've found my true vocation: To be a patron of the arts. For that I have everything I need except the money. But that will come," said Diaghilev, whose extravagance brought the company to brink of bankruptcy more than once.

Diaghilev was not interested in great dancers his aim was to push one to become a great artist. It meant that dancing was only part of it. You had to have knowledge and experience of all the arts," legendary dancer Dame Alice Markova said in 1992.

He was never afraid to shock and stood delighted to the wings when a near-riot disrupted the Paris premiere of the Rite Of Spring in 1913 as the audience reacted in horror to the dancing and Stravinsky's jarring music.

"The theatre seemed to be shaken by an earthquake... People shouted insults, howled and whistled, drowning the music. There was slapping and even punching," wrote one eyewitness.

"I thought there was something wonderful about the titanic struggle which must have been going on to keep these inaudible musicians and those deafened dancers together... The ballet was astoundingly beautiful."

A year later the same piece was met by cheers in Paris, but by the time World War I started there was a general feeling among critics that his work had already peaked.

Diaghilev and his troupe toured widely and worked without a break to 1929, when he finally succumbed to the diabetes he had been fighting for years. He died in August 1929 aged 57 and is buried in Venice.

Pioneering African art event winds down in U.K.

By Alan Raybould
Reuters

LONDON — The curtain will soon come down on the most ambitious attempt ever to present the diversity of African culture to a British audience.

A sprawling series of events — embracing everything from Nigerian Television to Ghanaian dancers, textiles to poetry — has taken place around the country under the "Africa95" banner since last autumn.

The centrepiece of the season was an exhibition of African art at the highbrow Royal Academy, including the oldest man-made artefact ever found on Earth, a hand axe from what is now Tanzania, reckoned to be over one-and-a-half million years old.

A spokeswoman for the academy said the exhibition had attracted around 2,000 people a day since opening last October.

"If you get that many through the door, you've got a successful exhibition," she said. It closes on Jan. 21, transferring to the Guggenheim Museum in New York in June.

The art critics have been as enthusiastic as the public,

fascinated by the miniature coil-sewn baskets made by Tutsi women in Rwanda and Burundi, the naturalistic, metal figures cast by 13th century Yoruba craftsmen and the bronzes from the ancient Kingdom of Benin.

Africa95 has served to move the public away from the "masks and drumming view" of African culture, to use the phrase of Adotey Bing, who runs the Africa Centre in London.

"No academic voice will any longer tell us that the peoples of Africa were savages until the times of imperial dispossessions a century ago," the noted British historian and African expert Basil Davidson wrote in the Guardian newspaper.

All the same, some Africans detect hypocrisy in the fact that many of the objects in the Royal Academy were plundered during colonisation and earlier Western forays into Africa, and will return to European museums and homes when the tour ends.

There were other misgivings, too. Africa95 cost around £5 million (\$7.75 million) to put on. Some £2.7 million (\$4.2 million) was raised through various sponsors, not all of them

universally welcomed.

The Royal Academy show, for example, was sponsored by De Beers and Anglo American Corp amongst others, and African playwright

Gabriel Gbadamosi, also writing in the Guardian, was suspicious of the motives of companies that were once so prominent in the apartheid governments of South Africa.

"The mask is African, but who's speaking?" Gbadamosi wrote.

Clementine Deliss, artistic director for Africa95, dismissed such criticism, pointing out that these companies were now actively helping to build a new South Africa alongside Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress.

"We would never have gone ahead with Anglo American and the others unless it had been agreed with the ANC, from day one," she told Reuters.

It was Deliss and other individuals active in the art scene who shaped what was to become Africa95 three years ago.

They managed to get senior figures at leading London galleries and museums on board, and found crucial early backing from

Britain's Blue Circle Cement Company — a big sponsor of local arts in many African states — and the Baring Foundation.

One concern was to promote working artists — Western buyers tend to be interested only in "primitive" art, neglecting modern developments, Deliss said.

The Royal Academy was reluctant to include modern art, but the innovative Whitechapel Gallery in East London was keen.

It featured work from seven countries, including harrowing paintings from Uganda depicting the repression of the rule of Idi Amin and the equally deadly AIDS epidemic in the 1990s.

Elsewhere, writers toured the country giving readings, and films rarely seen outside Africa found new audiences.

One, "Le Ballor D'or", a touching story from Guinea of a boy who realises his dream of becoming a footballer, was such a success that it had a limited commercial release in London.

The Barbican Gallery in the financial City of London put on an exhibition of colourful African textiles, demonstrating the links between art, politics and

style.

The motifs covered anything from the coronation of Britain's George VI in 1937 to Mandela's election campaign, from Guinness advertisements to the 1994 devaluation of the CFA Franc.

An "African Prom" at the Albert Hall headlined Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour and featured a rare London appearance by Khaled, the charismatic superstar of Algerian rai music.

African music long ago made the crossover into the West, and the promoters of Africa95 hope links will now flourish between African artists and institutions and their counterparts here.

Deliss has high hopes for such collaboration with South Africa and, more surprisingly, with Senegal, to west Africa.

Its capital, Dakar, is now one of the most vibrant cities in Africa, she said, quoting Youssou N'Dour: "Senegal is known for phosphates and peanuts, but one of its most important exports is culture."

Growing old in good health

Medical research may well rid old age of its aches and diseases due to the ravages of time. If tests prove positive in the long-term, the molecule discovered by Professor Baulieu will improve the life of senior citizens.

By Jean-Marc Dupuch

PARIS — It is no fun growing old! The bones become worn, the heart starts to quiver and the arteries become sclerotic. The memory fails and one suffers from rheumatism and arthritis. The machine starts going to pieces. One starts going downhill and one gets depressed. One spends one's time at the doctor's and one takes masses of medicines. One feels guilty to cost the National Health Service so much. The figures are just as discouraging as the years. After the age of 65, medical consumption is 2.5 times higher than the national average.

Ageing is thus a problem of society for which Professor Baulieu's treatment could be part of the solution. If tests confirm his discovery, one will not die older (pension fund organisations need not worry), but in good health. That is to say without rheumatism, loss of memory, brittleness of the bones and all other such signs of old age. However, even if it works, it will not be a miracle cure. It will not be able to help in cases of serious ailments, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease.

So who is the scientist behind this dream of growing old in good health? Etienne-Emile Baulieu, who heads Unit 33 of INSERM (the French National Health and Medical Research Institute) and is a member of the French Academy of Sciences and a professor at the Collège de France as well as winner of the Lasker Prize (which is the American equivalent of the Nobel Prize) for his work on endocrinology (the study of the glands which secrete hormones in the blood), is the inventor of RU 486, the first contraceptive pill.

About thirty years ago, he discovered DHEA sulphate, a substance secreted by the suprarenal glands. At the time, nobody was interested. Now researchers are studying it more and more. Among them, there is Samuel Yen, a professor of medicine at the University of California and a friend of Professor Baulieu's.

DHEA is a molecule from which the endocrine glands produce sex hormones. It appears in the blood around the age of 7 and not before. Its amount keeps on increasing up to about the age of 25. After that, it gradually diminishes. At the age of 70, only 10 per cent of the maximum quantity remains. The conclusion of the researchers was that "DHEA is a marker of the chronological age. Above all, it is its constant reduction which made me suspect that this substance had something to do with the slow degradation due to age."



With new ways, life may improve for senior citizens

Very cheap medicine

Studies of blood serum in serum banks, stocking the serum taken, throughout their lives, from thousands of people, as well as from risk-subjects (breast cancer in women and cardiovascular disease in men) revealed a correlation between the low level of DHEA in the blood and the appearance of these diseases.

The idea is thus to increase the level of DHEA, from the age of 40-50, by administering weak doses daily, with "the hope of improving the third stage of life." The drug exists. "It costs hardly anything, which, unfortunately, means that the big pharmaceutical groups to whom I offered it, are not interested," Professor Baulieu regrets, adding "It is easy to use. It is taken by mouth."

It still remains to be tested. The usual experiments on laboratory animals cannot be used as their blood does not contain any DHEA. Tests, with a placebo control, carried out by Professor Yen over a period of 12 weeks on people aged 40 to 70 provided proof of considerable improvement of well-being in men and even more in women. But the American scientist and his French counterpart are waiting for the results of long-term tests, to be certain. "We have to take care," Professor Baulieu insists, asking us to wait three or four years — L'Actualité En France.

The Never Ending Battle Against AIDS

By Dieter Schwab

German medical microbiologists have now developed a vaccine against AIDS which is to be tested in China from 1996. In order to rule out any risk to patients, the HI viruses were recreated in the laboratory only in their most constituent parts. Although they should no longer be dangerous in this state, they ought to be able to stimulate the body's own defences against the real pathogens.

PROFESSOR Hans Wolf, director of the Institute for Medical Microbiology at the University of Regensburg, and the project director Dr. Ralf Wagner are to place their expertise at the disposal of the Chinese government. Public health officials in China are planning to test the AIDS-vaccine in the Golden Triangle between China, Burma and Thailand to combat a small-scale epidemic which has evidently been broken out due to the use of contaminated needles by the local community of

drug addicts.

However, the mechanisms which have functioned so effectively in the vaccines against diseases such as measles, German measles and chicken pox are proving more problematic with AIDS. For it is not enough to simply introduce the killed virus into the body: As Dr. Wolf explains, although this does activate antibodies capable of intercepting freely circulating viruses in the blood, these antibodies are no longer effective once the pathogens have infiltrated the body's cells. At this stage only another mechanism of the body's immune system can help: The T-cells, also known as killer cells. However, these cannot be induced to greater vigilance simply by exposure to killed viruses. A live vaccine is required.

For many years, AIDS researchers have concentrated on those people who, despite being infected with the virus and classified as "HIV positive," have still not become sick, even some 10 years after contracting the deadly virus. As studies now show, the distinguishing feature among this group is that their killer cells responded promptly and have therefore managed to hold the virus in check. Naturally, it is feasible to stimulate the body's

immune system using an attenuated, genetically manipulated AIDS virus as a vaccine. But at the moment scientists are reluctant to take this step since no one can guarantee whether this variant could trigger AIDS in the decades to come, or even cause cancer by causing mutations in the body's cells.

The Regensburg-based team of researchers is therefore embarking on a different approach: The vaccine they are employing merely possesses the typical characteristics of the shell of the pathogen which are located on a carrier structure identical to the virus. According to the team, this principle will allow them to overcome another insidious aspect of the HI virus: its rapid mutation rate, a consequence of which can be seen in the large number of variants which display different characteristics in Africa than in Europe and China. When the virus multiplies in the body, after a time the DNA of the emerging variants can differ by up to 15 per cent. The vaccine must therefore be tailored to combat regional pathogens.

In mice and apes the Regensburg vaccine has already triggered the desired immune response. Following their approach to the team of German scientists,

the Chinese government is intending to conduct trials in the Golden Triangle on approximately 2,000 risk-group people. Although the Chinese are prepared to accept full responsibility for any possible outcome of these trials, the German researchers have merely agreed to place the results of their work at the disposal of their Chinese colleagues. However, the efficacy of this new concept in providing protection will only become clear in many years. Dr. Wolf maintains that he would regard a prevention rate of 60 per cent as a successful result. Other preventive vaccines, however, attain rates of over 90 per cent.

Even if the approach developed by the Regensburg team does prove successful, the path towards developing a safe vaccine is long and arduous. However, Dr. Wolf and Dr. Wagner are so confident that they are already preparing variants of their vaccine for Central Europe and Uganda. Nor are they discouraged by the total failure of similar tests with AIDS vaccines in the USA as well as France and Thailand. But even if their methods do not meet the same fate it will take many years until the HI virus is finally vanquished — The German Research Service.

Scientists boost bacteria to fight tuberculosis

By Lori Valigra

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Scientists said they had applied biotechnology to create a stronger germ that may more effectively fight tuberculosis (TB) and other human diseases.

The researchers boosted the Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) organism commonly used for both TB vaccines and for bladder cancer immunotherapy by packaging inside it five mammalian genes that stimulate the immune system.

The proteins produced by these genes, called cytokines, activate disease-fighting cells.

The work of the scientists from the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research in Cambridge and Boston's Children's Hospital appeared in a recent issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

"The efficacy of BCG vaccines for TB varies tremendously from 0 to 80 per cent," lead Whitehead researcher and co-author

Richard Young told Reuters.

"While we already have that safe vaccine, which is widely used in humans against TB, it is not that effective. We are trying to find a way to soup it up (boost it)," he said.

So far the researchers have tested the improved BCG in mice and have shown it can create an immune system response 10 times greater than normal BCG.

Dr. Young compared the human body's immune response to many battalions of white blood cells that are armoured and ready to fight infection. The new form of BCG gives each battalion extra allotments of ammunition.

BCG is the most common TB vaccine more than 2 billion people worldwide have taken it since it was developed in 1914.

TB remains a major killer in many societies. About one-third of humans worldwide are infected with TB, and 1-3 million people die from it each year. There are 10,000-20,000 cases annually in the United States.

Scientists make big step toward new hepatitis test

By Joanne Kenen

WASHINGTON — Scientists have announced they had taken a key step toward developing a test that will help keep a newly identified form of hepatitis out of the blood supply.

The findings by scientists at Genelabs Technologies GNLBO, a biotech firm in Redwood City, California, and their collaborators at several U.S. government and international laboratories, appear in the latest edition of the journal Science.

Doctors have long known there were cases of hepatitis that were "NONA, NONB, NONC" and that some people who donate blood have the unidentified virus.

Last year, Genelabs identified some of those mystery cases, probably about 10 per cent of them, as hepatitis G, Patrice Yarbough, a molecular biologist who heads Genelabs' Core Research, said in a telephone interview.

Scientists say it is likely that there are still more viruses that cause hepatitis that have not yet been identified.

But if scientists can build on the latest genetic research to create a test for hepatitis G, blood donors could be screened and tainted blood could be kept out of the blood supply, said Dr. Hal Margolis, head of the hepatitis division at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and a co-author of the Science research.

"We know it's in the blood supply now. And that's a problem," he said in an interview.

Dr. Yarbough said more research is necessary before a test can be developed, and Genelabs is not estimating a timetable. But the latest research is a crucial breakthrough for a test.

'Docking' site for 'good' cholesterol found

By Joanne Kenen

WASHINGTON — Scientists have announced that after years of searching they had found the first site where "good" cholesterol attaches to cells.

The finding will help doctors to learn more about clogged arteries, or atherosclerosis, a leading cause of death particularly in Western industrialized countries.

"This is key to opening up a new area of research so we can understand why good cholesterol is good," cell biologist Susan Acton, a co-author of the research done at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Southwestern Medical Centre in Dallas.

The finding will not immediately translate into new drugs, she cautioned. But a parallel finding in the 1970s about the cell receptor for "bad" cholesterol spurred research into the basic biology of cells and heart disease, and helped lead to the current generation of cholesterol therapies.

Good cholesterol, also known as HDL, circulates in the bloodstream, temporarily "docking" on a cell, depositing some cholesterol compounds called esters, and then moving

back out into the bloodstream.

No one is sure exactly what it then does, although the leading theory is that it soaks up excess cholesterol and then transports it to the liver or to tissues that need it to produce steroid hormones.

Some scientists also theorize that HDL may actually have a direct effect on artery walls, preventing fatty deposits from clogging the blood vessels. Dr. Acton, who is now at Millennium Pharmaceuticals in Cambridge, MIT's Monty Krieger and their colleagues report in the latest edition of the journal Science how they found a docking site, a cell-surface receptor called SR-BI, for the HDL "good" cholesterol.

"The identification of SR-BI ... is an important advance," Dr. Daniel Steinberg of the University of California at La Jolla wrote in an accompanying essay in Science. He cautioned, however, that more research is needed to understand it fully.

"We're still in the basic research area," Dr. Acton said. "We're not looking at humans yet."

"But if we figure out what it is good, maybe we can do something."

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

RARE FAUNA
By Bernice Gordon

ACROSS

- 1 Active person
- 3 Direction, at sea
- 10 Reptile
- 15 Rugged off
- 17 Raging
- 20 Punished more severely
- 21 Residence
- 22 City in Idaho
- 23 Antelope in need of a shave?
- 25 Battering incident?
- 27 Pl
- 30 Bird Pl, for one
- 31 Favorite
- 32 Pl for one
- 34 Fishlike parts

DOWN

- 1 Money owed
- 2 Brightly colored
- 3 Abstract
- 4 Legal argument
- 5 Water down
- 6 Leading man
- 7 Toward the mouth
- 8 Don't oppose
- 9 Written discussion
- 10 In an expressed
- 11 Screen's Flynn
- 12 Casting of frozen
- 13 my brother's
- 14 Shadow's delight
- 15 Style of clothing
- 16 Setting and
- 17 Biblical prophet
- 18 Something given as security

Diagrams, 19x19
By Harold B. Counts

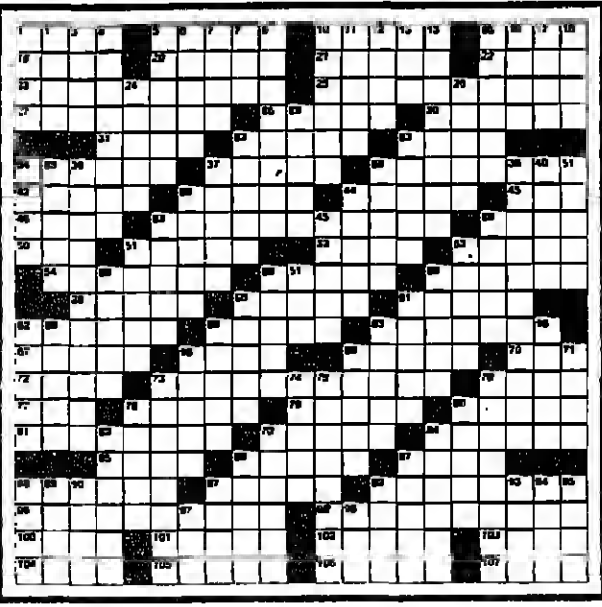
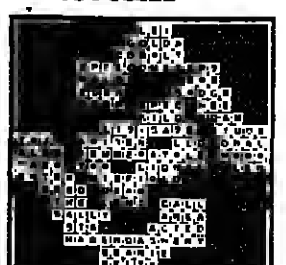
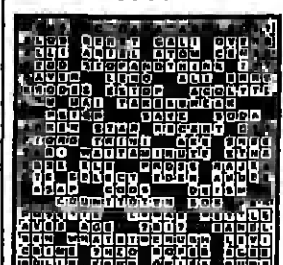
ACROSS

- 1 Lyrics
- 4 Chorus
- 6 Rod of terms
- 9 Zee employee
- 10 Zee's love
- 12 Zee
- 14 Zee
- 16 Zee
- 18 Zee
- 20 Zee
- 22 Zee
- 24 Zee
- 26 Zee
- 28 Zee
- 30 Zee
- 32 Zee
- 34 Zee

DOWN

- 1 Dies
- 2 Live
- 3 Hostess
- 4 Zee
- 5 Zee
- 6 Zee
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- 11 Zee
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SOLUTIONS OF LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE



Last Week's Cryptograms

1. Really good mechanic fixed poor little boy's moped scooter car for a song.
2. Neophyte vegetable gardener must have checked many seed catalogues looking for soft or hard-boiled eggplant.
3. Grumpy grappa grumbles that his beef pump root is simply too skimpy, and asks grandma for a more ample sample.
4. Raindrops drip down two wet windowpanes.

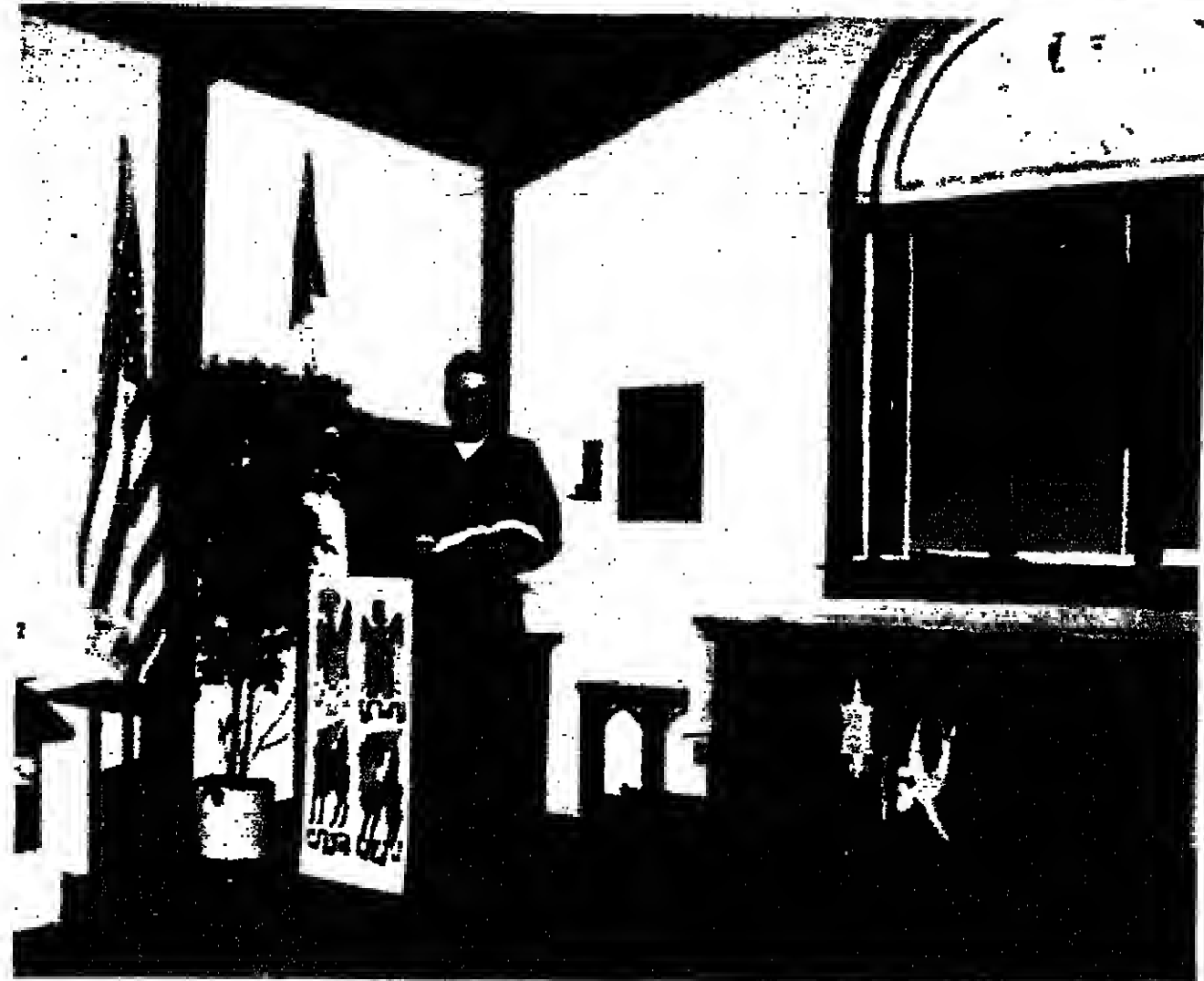
CRYPTOGRAMS

1. SZ MOOLG ZE RO INN ZEE EGG ZE ZHO
KEKPO HROO RO NEKPOG ZE MOO ZHO
ZSLO HIM ZOO ZE EOO. — By R.C. Doyle

2. NMDWAGKWA WIOPEW KUOO TC STOMP
OYNGRAD XTY WT GIER LOWWRACUS ENKS
CTA WXRNA LIKEDWATER. — By Ed Huddleston

3. ABIDEFGUOUPMA GUSTU ABUY OIS I
RYMA IPFIAL ZOTY PUBS FU FILT ONE
FDGY MY FOT PIGTO. — By Deane U. McGloay

4. OUR FL AULEGA DADINRR KCFY DT OUCHY
TIPGA FELT FLOP? — By Frank N. Stein



Chaplain Mark Smith poses for a picture in the Chapel of Snows at McMurdo base in Antarctica (AFP photo)

Healing the spirit at Chapel of the Snows

By Mark Trevelyan
Reuter

MCMURDO SOUND. Science provides food for the mind, but Navy Chaplain Mark Smith must cater to the spiritual needs of more than 1,000 Americans working at the biggest U.S. base in Antarctica.

Smith, in his second full season on the ice, sees his job as helping residents cope with the "human drama" of living in an isolated community away from friends and family. Bereavement and marriage break-ups, of which he has seen a number this year, are two of the biggest traumas that people can face in Antarctica.

"We are the only source of counselling here. If we can't help them get through, they have to be shipped back home," Mr. Smith said in an interview. Although Mr. Smith, 38, is a Presbyterian, the tiny Chapel of the Snows is meant to serve all faiths. A

Jewish Torah is kept there for services conducted by a lay reader, and there are stores of chicken soup and matzo for the Passover meal.

The Roman Catholic community is served by Father Simoo Eccleston, a new Zealand priest on contract to the U.S. base at McMurdo. Before he leaves next month, he will bless bread and wine for communion during the Antarctic winter, when the base's population shrinks to around 250 from about 1,100 in summer.

Mr. Smith says the highlight of the season is celebrating Christmas, with a brass band, carols and communion. A harder task is lifting the McMurdo community from the inevitable post-Christmas "lows", when the excitement dies down and people have time to miss family and friends.

When depression strikes, drink can be a problem. A chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous meets twice a week in the chapel.

"People get in an isolated place and they tend to climb into the bottle. Traditionally that has been a problem down here," said Mr. Smith.

Sometimes tragedy strikes close to home. The McMurdo community was traumatised last season when a navy cargo handler was killed in a fall from a mountain.

Worst affected were his climbing companion and a group of medics who tried desperately to thaw and revive the frozen body for hours after the tragedy.

Mr. Eccleston administered the last rites to the man. It later turned out that he was a Catholic, and relatives back home were comforted to know the priest had been at hand.

"Crises at home, crises here — we intervene in quite a few of those," Mr. Smith said. "You need to know how to help a community get through that and recover."

The chapel was not part of the original plan for

McMurdo in the 1950s, but was built to meet a spiritual need in what Mr. Smith calls this "completely artificial community". He believes it is the only church in Antarctica.

A stained glass window with Antarctic themes is the striking feature of the present building built in 1989. It features an outline map of the continent, a communion chalice with bread and grapes, a Bible and a penguin.

Mr. Eccleston said the most rewarding part of his work was watching non-believers turn to God, often because of the sheer beauty they found in Antarctica.

"In being down here, their horizons are broadened. The grandeur of this place strikes them in such a way that they start asking questions," he said.

Mr. Smith concurred. "Even the most sacrilegious people will look at the incredible ice floes and mountains here and say: 'There really is a God, there must be'."

Tokyo homeless spurn a short-lived luxury City builds \$2 million shelter, but will raze it in the spring

By Mary Jordan

TOKYO — Winter has arrived, and the homeless are cold. So the city of Tokyo is busy with its annual solution: Build a \$2 million apartment house, then tear it down in two months.

City officials say the homeless problem is growing, but no neighbourhood is willing to accept a permanent shelter in its midst. That's why the city will spend about \$10,000 a person to give 200 homeless men a couple of warm months.

Even the homeless think this is odd. "We would be staying there only two months," said Tatsuo Fuji, 49, who usually lives in a refrigerator box in a train station. "How can they call that a home?"

Upward of 10,000 homeless people sit huddled in cardboard boxes, under blankets in parks and in tents beneath viaducts, providing a sight of the down-and-out not seen here since just after World War II.

The numbers are said to have doubled in four years, since the economy turned sour and made jobs more scarce. The unemployment rate is still only about 3.4 per cent, but that is a record high for post-war Japan.

In a sign of the growing problem, the government started its winter build-and-scrap policy three years

ago. Last year, for the first time, it tried to count the number of homeless, arriving at 3,300. Those who feed the street people say that the real number is three times higher and that the government's temporary solutions are based on the wrongheaded hope that the problem will vanish in the warm spring air.

"It is true it costs a lot of money," said Masashi Matsuda, director of a division of the city welfare bureau. "Some people ask, 'Why don't we give that money directly to the people?'"

But Mr. Matsuda said the aim of the shelter, which took a crew of workers a month to build, was "to encourage them to go back to normal life" with the help of counsellors, medical care and job placement specialists.

"I've been on skid rows in New York and Chicago, and there are several differences with the homeless here," said Ted Morris, director of the Salvation Army in Japan. Fewer have mental health problems, many are farmers who descended on Tokyo for day labour that did not materialise and, he said, "it's amazing how polite they are."

As Mr. Morris helped feed 400 people in a train station, he ran out of second helpings of rice curry to the middle of a long, hungry line. The next in line told

Mr. Morris not to feel bad. "He said, 'No problem.' In America, I might have gotten banged over the head."

Generally, the Japanese homeless do not panhandle. They just sit there, accepting blankets and food if offered.

Three-quarters of the Japanese people consider themselves middle-class and the relatively even distribution of wealth here is a source of national pride. While there are plenty of poor people, Japan has no recent precedent for dealing with the growing strata of people at the very bottom of society.

Nowhere is Japan's problem more visible than in Shinjuku station, one of the busiest train depots in the world, where 3.5 million commuters a day come and go. In one covered station passageway more than 200 homeless men live in a row of carrels known as Card-board Alley.

Each box provides enough space for its dweller to lie down and to keep his few belongings. The boxes almost appear to be in neighbourhoods, sorted by their owners' habits. Some sections are tidy, even decorated with stuffed animals. In other sections, the boxes are messy and smell bad.

Most of these homeless keep to themselves. But in Sanya, a notorious district of flophouses where day

labourers, and now homeless, gather, many are drunk and aggressive. Salvation Army food crew and others stay clear at night.

The 200 people in Card-board Alley are the ones being asked to move into the new two-story temporary home, with warm bedrooms and spoolless baths.

"I don't know anyone who wants to go there," said Hideji Horii, 42, who became homeless in September when he lost his construction job. Even though the site of the temporary home is only four miles (6.5 kilometres) away, Mr. Horii calls it the boondocks. Lights go out at 10 p.m., and alcohol is banned.

The Shinjuku homeless know they have an added problem: The city wants to evict them permanently to install a pedestrian conveyor.

Mr. Horii's hands were bandaged after a skirmish with the police a week ago. According to newspaper accounts, about 50 government officials and 230 security guards showed up to give notice that they wanted to close Card-board Alley.

"We like it here," Mr. Horii said. "We are not going."

International Herald Tribune.

Cabinet change likely to take more time

(Continued from page 1)

been mandated by the King to work on a reshuffle also said that the prime minister may take some time in weighing his options before taking a final decision, which may not come before the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Several factors, sources say, will influence such a decision, including whether the prime minister feels that introducing change to the present Cabinet is what is required by and for the country now, given the fact that the government has completed its official mandate, as stipulated in the King's letter

of appointment exactly one year ago.

"The task of this government, as mandated in its letter of appointment, was completed when Parliament approved investment and other laws related to lifting the boycott against Israel and when Jordan signed all its bilateral agreements with the Jewish state and presented the budget to Parliament and won its approval," a well-informed source told the Jordan Times.

Other sources, however, argue that the mandate of Sharif Zeid's government does or should include the passage in Parliament of the

electoral law, a draft of which already has been prepared by the government and is under discussion with parliamentary blocs. Relations with such important Arab countries as Syria and Saudi Arabia are at a too-sensitive-point at this stage also that this particular government should see them through before it leaves office, these sources say.

"It is true that His Majesty might not see in these latter factors a serious impediment to change should he decide the change is necessary," one of the sources said. "But I think the ball remains in Sharif Zeid's court: whether he wants to continue serving as prime minister or not," the source added.

Sharif Zeid, it became

apparent from information gathered yesterday, is not preparing to leave office anytime soon, not before the end of Ramadan at any rate, when he is scheduled to accompany the King on his trip to Saudi Arabia towards the end of the Holy Month.

"Sharif Zeid also has a host of other engagements that he intends to fulfill as prime minister," a well-informed government source said. "I expect him to stay at least until the end of Ramadan, the source added without elaboration."

Dr. Majali was informally asked yesterday about his possible appointment to the Royal Court chief's job. He did not give a definitive answer.

Asia's new middle class to reach hundreds of millions by 2000

SINGAPORE (AFP) — First they wanted to have cars. Now they complain about the traffic.

A new middle class that will encompass hundreds of millions of people by 2000 has emerged in Asia, creating a vast consumer market that could help fuel world economic growth into the next century.

But cities are being asphyxiated as higher-earning Asians rush to buy the ultimate middle-class symbol — a car — while planners fight an uphill battle keeping up with demand for their other major aspiration: better housing.

"It's very, very impressive," John Malcolm Dowling, assistant chief economist of the Manila-based Asian Development Bank, said of the sudden new affluence.

He described the expanding middle class, with its insatiable appetite for mobile phones, computers and other gadgets, as "a growing and important factor in world consumer markets" as Asia continues to spearhead global growth.

How to define the middle class is elusive — one nation's income ceiling is another one's floor — but it is clear that affluence is spreading around the region, as great nations like China and India scale the income ladder.

The "dragons" of East Asia — Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and

Taiwan — showed the way, followed by Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

Indicators like savings rates, consumption patterns, higher educational levels and a growing share of white-collar workers in the labour force affirm the rise of the new class.

In China, some 100 million people earning the equivalent of \$1,000 a year are considered "economically active." They would swell to 270 million by 2000 if economic growth continues at eight per cent, according to one study.

Chinese earning several thousand dollars a year constitute an urban nouveau riche, many of them young couples. More than one million Chinese are now worth upwards of one million yuan (\$120,000), although \$10 million in 120 million of their countrymen still live in poverty.

In Asia's other awakening giant, India, estimates of the middle class vary widely from 100 million to 350 million, out of a total population of 930 million with an average annual income of just \$300.

Economic reforms launched in 1991 and satellite TV have changed consumption patterns. Sixty per cent of Indians are still engaged in agriculture and 200 million people are estimated to be living below the poverty line.

Tiny Singapore is perhaps the archetypal middle-class nation, with more than 90 per cent of its three million people owning their homes, mostly in public housing estates where the average family earned, \$1,900 in 1993.

In Hong Kong, a 1993 survey put the median monthly household income at \$1,700, with half the population of six million in public housing.

While Hong Kong's super-rich sit through traffic in Rolls Royces, those in the middle-income bracket are hit by high inflation, which last year was 8.7 per cent, and worries about the Chinese take-over in mid-1997.

In South Korea, average income has risen to \$10,000 a year, from widespread poverty at the end of the Korean War in the early 1950s.

But housing is a tough problem as the urban-based population now exceeds 85 per cent of the total. The average South Korean worker is \$12,000 in debt, mainly due to housing costs.

In Malaysia, private estimates put the middle class at 60 per cent of the population of 18 million, using the income bracket of \$800 to \$1,000, compared to about 40 per cent before a non-stop boom began in 1987.

Hardcore poverty went down to three per cent of the population in 1993, but the government wants

better income distribution among the races.

In Jakarta, a survey outfit estimated the middle-income group at 18 per cent of urban Indonesians. Officials say poverty was reduced from 63 per cent of the population in 1970 to 14 per cent in 1993.

"The term middle class does not really apply here. We're talking about people with a bit of money to spend on a car or television," said Farquhar Sterling, senior technical advisor at Survey Research Indonesia.

In the Philippines, figures for the middle class are not available but officials say the number of poor fell to 36 per cent of the population in 1994 from 40 per cent in 1991. Car sales reached an all-time high of 71,100 units in 1995, choking Manila, whose bedroom communities have spread to provincial towns.

The classic case of traffic hell is Thailand, which posted the world's fastest economic growth rate from 1984-93 at 8.2 per cent a year. The number of middle-income families is expanding 10 per cent a year, one study showed.

Traffic congestion in Bangkok is now estimated to cost the economy four billion dollars annually — 11 million dollars a day — and if the trend continues, 1.3 million cars will be sold a year by 2000, at least half in the capital, triggering nightmares of a total gridlock.

Dialogue over election law

(Continued from page 1)

Deputy Mohammad Oweidah said. "There is no relation between what we proposed and what was offered in the government's draft."

According to the government's draft, Amman, which has a population of 1,579,809 will be allocated 22 seats instead of the present 18; Irbid (population 747,179), will have 19 seats instead of nine; Balqa (population 280,537) will have 10 seats instead of eight; Mafrq (population 178,856) will maintain its three seats; Karak (population 169,770) will have 10 seats instead of eight; Jerash (population 123,190) will have three seats instead of two; Madaba (population 103,183) will maintain three seats; Ajloun (population 94,548) will maintain three seats; Aqaba (population 79,839) will maintain the two seats; Ma'an (population 79,670) will have four seats instead of five and Tafleh (population 62,783) will maintain the two seats.

Central bedouins, northern bedouins and southern bedouins areas will be allocated three seats each.

Opposition deputies argue that to give more credibility to the system more safeguards have to be established. One such safeguard would be to have an independent supervisory body rather than the Ministry of Interior overseeing the elections, according to leftist Deputy Toujan Faisal.

Concern over "government interference" was also raised by Ms. Faisal in the debate over whether the law should be changed to allow the Armed Forces and police to vote.

It seems likely that the government will resist significant changes to the present constituencies, parliamentarians say, but it might address the issue of the number of deputies, electoral procedures and a better balance between the number of seats and population.

Jordan, Germany hold talks

(Continued from page 1)

EU's budget, is awaiting a feasibility study on the projects financed by the EU before proposing additional funds. The study of dams, storage and conveyance schemes and treatment plants will be ready by mid-1997.

The master plan was jointly prepared by Israel and Jordan.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl promised to support water projects during a

visit to Jordan and Israel last year.

"There is a moral commitment from Germany to help support some of the needs of these peace projects through the EU, of which Germany is a major contributor," one official said.


On Tuesday, Dr. Khalaf headed a Jordanian delegation to talks held in the Hague on economic development in the Middle East.

7 seeks JEA presidency

(Continued from page 12)

candidates. They are: Jamal Shakhir, Ali Abul Sukkar and Husni Abu Ghaida. The latter has lost the last JEA presidency election — which was won by Mr. Shbeilat — but is said to enjoy wide popularity. He is expected to be the IAF candidate for the vice-presidency this time.

The nationalist bloc is fielding two strong candidates. They are: Kifah Marqah and Abdul Rahman Bitar. The remaining five candidates are independents. They are: Mahoud Aqel, Samir Najjar, Mohammad Muhanna, Diab Sarhan and Ayman Ma'ayeb.



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Oman in five-year plan to develop bourse

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Gulf state of Oman is about to launch a five-year plan to develop its stock market as part of overall economic reforms to neutralise the effects of weak oil prices, officials have said.

The British Anderson Consulting Company, a key international financial adviser, will carry out the plan under an agreement signed recently, said Mahmoud Al Jarwani, director general of the Muscat Stock Exchange.

"It is a five-year development plan designed to upgrade performance at the exchange and attract investment," he told AFP by tele-

phone. "It will start within two weeks and will include development of share-trading and other activities, and the establishment of new facilities. They involve centres for financial settlement, and depositing and transfer," he said.

Oman, a non-OPEC oil producer, has one of the busiest stock markets in the Middle East given its measures to expand the private sector and attract investment through allowing a greater access to shares by foreigners.

Foreign investors can now own up to 49 per cent of the

shares and they could be authorised to buy more with a prior government approval.

Mr. Jarwani said new laws opening more companies to foreigners had boosted foreign investment from a negligible level to eight per cent of the market capitalisation of the shares traded in the exchange.

His figures showed market capitalisation increased to around \$3.2 billion at the end of 1995 from nearly \$2.9 billion at the end of 1994.

Turnover, covering the value of shares traded in the market, stood at 110 million Omani riyals (\$286 million) in 1995 compared with

around 126.2 million riyals (\$328.1 million).

Mr. Jarwani said the decline was caused by a rush for new share floatations in the primary market, with a value of 175.4 million riyals (\$452 million).

They were issued by 22 companies, of which 13 were set up last year.

"It is natural that the strong demand for the primary market will affect demand in the secondary market. The market remains healthy in general and the decline does not imply a weakening in trading," he said.

Mr. Jarwani said the number of banks and companies trading their shares in the

market stood at 85 by the end of 1995 compared with less than 60 when the exchange was opened in 1989. The index, which has a base of 100 points, closed at a record 158.13 at the end of 1995 compared with 146.50 at the end of 1994.

He said growing profits by most trading institutions, which recorded an increase of 24 per cent in the first half of 1995, combined with economic reforms to keep the market busy and absorb swelling domestic liquidity.

Oman's reforms, the most sweeping in the oil-rich Gulf, included privatisation, improvement of investment laws, incentives for non-oil

industries, lower taxes for certain projects and opening up the bourse.

It also became one of the few Arab states which are setting up investment funds with foreign equity. Three funds have been created and there are plans to establish similar investment portfolios, Mr. Jarwani said.

As the stock market entered its seventh year in 1996, the share index hit another record of 160.10 points.

"We have entered 1996 with a strong start and a stronger investors' confidence. I think this year will be another year of prosperity for the stock market and the Omani economy in general," he said.

DAILY BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Company plans to set up large truck terminal in Amman

THE UNIFIED For Organising Land Transport Company has decided to establish the first "truck terminal" in the Kingdom at an estimated cost of JD 9 million. The company's general manager said the terminal will be set up on a 2,500-dunum area in Amman. He added that contacts were under way with the authorities to back the plan and start implementing it. According to the general manager, Mohammad Abu Assaf, the terminal would be a large advanced centre to distribute and handle goods and a station for big containers that carry all kinds of cargo and products. Moreover, Mr. Abu Assaf said, the terminal would be a modern centre to service small and large trucks as well as merchants, drivers and all those working or interested in land transport. In addition, the terminal would be provided with all public facilities (Al Ra'i).

Jordan Kuwait Bank boosts net profit by 16 per cent

NET PROFIT generated by the Jordan Kuwait Bank last year has reached JD 4.4 million, a 16 per cent growth over 1994. The management of the bank does not plan to distribute dividends to shareholders this year and, instead, intends to increase reserves to be able to raise the bank's capital to JD 20 million, in line with Central Bank demands. The bank's capital at present is JD 10 million and, to double it next year, the management intends to distribute to shareholders a half a share for free in 1997 against each share they hold. The general manager said shareholders' equity at the end of 1995 will be more than JD 20 million in addition to more than JD 8.5 million in legal reserves. Deposits grew by 10 per cent but loans and credit facilities rose by 30 per cent to JD 202.2 million and JD 95.99 million respectively (Al Aswaaq).

Municipality of Greater Amman executes 80 tenders valued at JD 20m

OUT OF a total of 86 tenders, the Municipality of Greater Amman was able to complete 80 tenders, valued at about JD 20 million, during 1995 and the rest are expected to be finished during the first quarter of 1996. Among the major tenders completed last year were two tunnels at a cost of JD 805,455, many pavements, road shoulders and markets for JD 1 million and asphalt paving operations on a number of streets for JD 5 million. The bridge extension of the Ministry of Interior Circle, which is expected to be completed in March, cost JD 1.53 million while the municipality building at the city downtown cost JD 2.3 million with only 50 per cent of it completed. The park in front of the Prime Ministry cost JD 366,540 while spending on building concrete stairways at various locations in Amman amounted to approximately JD 2 million. Purchasing of heavy machinery for various purposes cost the municipality about JD 2.5 million (Al Ra'i).

Public shareholding companies have JD 14.8 billion of assets

PUBLIC SHAREHOLDING companies had a total of 14.8 billion of assets at the end of 1994. According to the tenth directory issued by the Amman Financial Market, assets accounted for 86 per cent of the total and industrial companies had an 11 per cent share. The directory showed that profits of the public shareholding companies amounted to JD 180 million at the end of 1994. JD 31 million more than recorded in 1993. Dividends distributed to shareholders were about JD 79.5 million or 2.3 per cent of the market value of all shares which totalled JD 2.43 billion (Al Aswaaq).

Jordanians visiting Israel must pay JD 8 departure tax

A JD 8 departure tax should be paid by every Jordanian citizen travelling by land to Israel, according to a decision by the Ministry of Finance. This decision applies to every Jordanian holding a passport with a visa to enter Israel obtained from the Israeli embassy in Amman. This tax comes in the aftermath of signing a transport agreement which will take effect this month and which will allow cars to cross between the two countries (Al Aswaaq).

MCI, Microsoft in powerful online alliance

NEW YORK (R) — Microsoft Corp. and MCI Communications Inc. have teamed up in a mighty alliance of online computer services and telecommunications, bringing a host of products to each company's customers.

No money is changing hands, but the venture could rewrite the rules on software distribution and give MCI a big leg up in competing with ATT Corp., which is also pressing ahead in the online computer world.

As a first step in the venture, Washington, D.C.-based MCI will offer a customised version of the Microsoft's online and Internet service, to its 20 million long distance

telephone and business service customers.

The offering could dramatically increase the reach of the young network, which was launched this summer with Microsoft's Windows 95 operating system and currently ranks No. 4 in the online industry.

Microsoft, in turn, will market a range of MCI services directly through Windows 95 that is the dominant upgrade option among personal computer users.

"This means that you will be able to order MCI services from ISDN (a high-capacity phone line), to call conferencing, to friends and family calling plans, all through Microsoft software," Bert Roberts, MCI chief ex-

ecutive told journalists at a conference call.

MCI will adopt the Microsoft Internet Explorer as its preferred software for navigating the Internet computer network, giving a leg up to the software giant as it moves into the Internet market.

"We think it is important to get the (market) share of our browser up over the next seven years," said Bill Gates, the billionaire chief executive of Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft.

MCI will package Explorer with other Microsoft products as part of its Internet offering. It will continue to support a competing and widely used browser from Netscape Communications Corp. for customers who already have it.

MCI is setting up a division to help its customers connect to the world-wide web, the graphical portion of the Internet.

Separately MCI said it was seeking fresh partners for its existing online venture with News Corp., which would dilute the 50/50 stakes of the two companies. This venture would have separate management and control over its own products.

Analysts said the deal would provide Microsoft with another key outlet for its computer software, allowing MCI customers to download bits of software over a network rather than buying a whole software package.

"It revolutionises the cost structure and economics of software distribution," said Mark Brunaceo of consultants COBA-MID.

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Wednesday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3798/08	Canadian dollar	1.4914/24
	1.4914/24	Deutsche marks	1.6704/14
	1.6704/14	Dutch guilders	1.2150/60
	1.2150/60	Swiss francs	30.66/70
	30.66/70	Belgian francs	5.1220/70
	5.1220/70	French francs	1600.1/1.6
	1600.1/1.6	Italian lire	107.06/16
	107.06/16	Japanese yen	6.9570/70
	6.9570/70	Swedish crowns	6.5290/40
	6.5290/40	Norwegian crowns	5.7682/82
	5.7682/82	Danish crowns	1.4199/04
	1.4199/04	Singapore dollars	0.7436/41
	0.7436/41	Australian dollars	7.7322/27
	7.7322/27	Hong Kong dollars	

One sterling \$1.5066/76
One ounce of gold \$402.30/402.80

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 31/01/1996				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
BANKING SECTOR				
JORDAN BANK P.C.	300	69954	232.250	232.400
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	12789	56109	4.370	4.400
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	1500	4010	2.670	2.680
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/NEW	800	1283	2.350	2.340
THE HOUSING BANK	12650	63886	4.890	5.000
JORDAN KIWAT BANK	1000	2734	2.730	2.720
JORDAN GULF BANK	15100	15407	1.020	1.020
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	13437	57226	3.700	3.700
JORDAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	2000	8643	4.320	4.400
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	40243	52748	1.310	1.320
BANKS SECTOR	107744	321962	INDEX NUMBER: 158.16	CHANGE: +0.742
INSURANCE SECTOR				
JORDAN FARMER INSURANCE	1450	4043	2.710	2.800
JORDAN LAND INSURANCE	2000	4000	2.000	2.000
JORDAN GULF INSURANCE	300	825	2.750	2.750
INSURANCE SECTOR	3750	8868	INDEX NUMBER: 129.85	CHANGE: +0.432
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR				
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	5586	9414	1.690	1.700
IRBIL DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	6870	9272	1.340	1.350
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	100	258	2.580	2.580
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	450	702	1.540	1.560
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	3000	3180	1.060	1.060
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	800	374	4.720	4.730
WILKINSON EQUIP. SERVICES & MAINTENANCE	5450	11594	2.120	2.120
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & CONSTRUCTION	40900	141113	3.470	3.480
ARAB CENTER FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	450	322	1.160	1.160
ARAB TRAVEL UNIVERSITY	14050	30920	2.180	2.200
ARAB CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	1000	520	5.200	5.200
JORDAN LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	78676	204489	INDEX NUMBER: 126.00	CHANGE: +0.327
SERVICES SECTOR				
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORY	41550	152019	3.630	3.700
JORDAN PROPERTIES BUREAU	1254	1254	1.000	1.000
THE ARAB VOICES	500	2785	5.570	5.530
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	188	1883	9.970	9.970
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	450	180	1.500	1.500
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING	6695	10093	4.440	4.530
THE JORDAN PAPER MANUFACTURING	3000	4390	2.200	2.200
RAPIA INDUSTRIES	625	1307	2.090	2.090
BAR AL DAM DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	3630	26518	7.300	7.300
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRIES	940	3074	3.260	3.450
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	41850	22881	5.460	5.460
ARAB POWER CONVEYING & TRADING	1150	1540	1.360	1.390
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	10050	16333	1.660	1.650
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	2400	2326	0.960	0.960
THE JORDANIAN PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	100	137	1.370	1.370
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	125	448	3.600	3.600
JORDAN SULPHUR-CHEMICALS	400	493	1.230	1.240
ARAB CENTER FOR BANKING & CREDIT	1300	2111	1.620	1.620
UNIVERSAL FOODS INDUSTRIES	1350	4162	3.090	3.080
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	4200	7718	1.850	1.840
JORDAN NEW CEMENT	4400	5712	1.300	1.300
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	50	68	1.360	1.360
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL INDUSTRY	200	308	1.490	1.540
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	125746	295460	INDEX NUMBER: 122.70	CHANGE: +0.703
GRAND TOTAL				
	317936	844779	INDEX NUMBER: 154.47	CHANGE: +0.692
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Financial Markets

Jordan Times

In co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

Bi-monthly Interest Rates

Date: 1/31/96

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.18	5.12	5.06	4.87
Sterling Pound	6.00	6.00	5.93	5.87
Deutsche Mark	5.18	5.12	5.06	3.00
Swiss Franc	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26
Japanese Yen	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
European Currency Unit	4.65	4.62	4.56	4.50

Interest rate rates for assets according to J.S. Dollar 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: 1/31/96

Currency	Buy	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.708	0.710
Sterling Pound	1.0655	1.0708
Deutsche Mark	0.4757	0.4775
Swiss Franc	0.5819	0.5848
French Franc	0.1383	0.1390
Japanese Yen*	0.6616	0.6649
Dutch Guilder	0.4243	0.4264
Swedish Krona	—	—
Italian Lira*	0.2444	0.2446
Belgian Franc	—	—

* Per 100

Other Currencies

Date: 1/31/96

Currency	Buy	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8630	1.8780
Lebanese Lira*	0.0445	0.0448
Saudi Riyal	0.1570	0.1578
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.3070	3.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1332	0.1345
Egyptian Pound	0.3400	0.3408
Omani Riyal	1.5330	1.5410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma*	0.2765	0.2805
Cypriot Pound	1.4025	1.5365

* Per 100

1st Division Basketball Championship

Jazireh, Orthodoxi clash Friday

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The final round of the First Division Basketball Championship gets into full gear Friday when Al Jazireh take on Al Orthodoxi in a match eagerly awaited by fans and officials.

Organisers the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) have decided to hold the Amman matches at 8 p.m. instead of 7 p.m., giving fans ample time to attend after iftar.

Unlike other years, a relatively high number of fans are expected to increase in the final round as matches including Jazireh, Ahli and Orthodoxi are crucial in determining the winner.

The reason for the competitive and interesting championship this year is Al Jazireh who have delighted officials by changing the nature of the competition.

For the past decade only Al Ahli-Orthodoxi match would attract a large number

of fans as both teams remained unbeaten and their clash would determine the winner.

However this year is different. Last season's third-placed team, Al Jazireh, did the unexpected by upsetting titleholders Al Ahli 76-73 in the first round. Al Ahli beat Al Orthodoxi 90-76 while Al Orthodoxi beat Al Jazireh 72-66.

These results made the fight for the title a three-way race as the top three teams ended the first round tied with 7 points in the overall standings after losing a match each.

As the second round began Tuesday Al Ahli remained on top of the standings after scoring a 95-77 win over Al Watani. Al Ahli's coach gave bench players a chance in this match in which Al Watani scored their best result of the competition, the first half ended 48-39.

In Irbid, Al Jazireh maintained second place after scoring a 68-38 win over Al Jalil. The first half ended

26-14.

Al Jazireh's clash with Al Orthodoxi Friday is important for both teams. Al Jazireh's win will eliminate Al Orthodoxi's bid for the title, and boost Al Jazireh's chances of improving their standing.

"We will play for a win," Al Jazireh's coach Fadi Sabab Wednesday told the Jordan Times. "Before this season our players used to play with a different attitude against the top two teams hoping only to keep a low gap. The first round result have demonstrated that we

are a different team. Our form is improving and we can do better," Sabab added.

Al Orthodoxi will not be easy opponents however.

Although they beat Al Jazireh with difficulty in the first round, and recently lost to Al Ahli, their game Friday is crucial in keeping their title bid alive. If they lose to Al Jazireh and Al Ahli, Al Orthodoxi will finish in third place for the first time. Therefore their players are expected to give it all they have and try to shut down Al Jazireh's ambitions.

Friday's schedule					
Jalil-Watani	(Irbid) 7 p.m.			
Jazireh-Orthodoxi	(Sports Palace) 8 p.m.			
STANDINGS					
	P	W	L	SF	PTS
Ahli	5	4	1	455	324
Jazireh	5	4	1	370	282
Orthodoxi	4	3	1	361	271
Jalil	5	1	4	266	261
Watani	5	—	5	299	528

Premier League roundup

Top four teams meet this weekend

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's Premier League soccer championship enters a crucial phase Thursday with the kickoff of the 20th week of the competition.

The results of the upcoming matches are extremely important as they will somewhat determine the race for the title with the top four teams facing each other.

Leaders Al Ramtha meet Al Faisali while Al Wihdat face Kufroum. If Al Ramtha and Al Wihdat win their matches Al Ramtha will remain in the lead and limit the fight for the title to both teams eliminating Al Faisali's hopes. That is why Al Faisali's match with Al Ramtha will be a last chance for a record 26th title.

Al Wihdat will also try to hold on to their title by eliminating Kufroum's ambitions.

Fans will therefore have an interesting week as another tough fight starts in the relegation zone.

While Al Jalil, Russeifa, and Sahab have already been relegated the fourth team is still undecided. Al Baqaa are closer to relegation as they are in 9th place with 21 points.

Jordan Electricity Authority

JEA declares about the extension of the closing date for the following tenders:

- 1- Tender No. JS 01/95 transmission lines is extended to be 12:00 a.m. on Thursday 29th of February 1996 instead of 10th February 1996.
- 2- Tender No. 115/95 for Tareq Substation is extended to be 10:00 a.m. on Monday 26th February 1996 instead of 12th February 1996.

Director General
Dipl. Ing. M.S. Arafah

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 - Experience in Women's Issues an asset.
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 - Excellent command of English & Arabic.
 - Minimum 5 years experience in similar field.
- 3) Executive Secretary
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 - Minimum 3 years experience as an executive secretary.
 - English / Arabic typing.
 - Filing & computer knowledge.
- 4) Activities Coordinator
 - University degree.
 - Minimum 5 years experience in managerial position.
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 - Perfect control of the English language.

Please send a cover letter with your CV stating the preferred position to:

The General Manager,
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Deadline for receiving applications: Feb. 10, 1996.

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For information/interview, please contact:
Ghada Taha
Tel: 661836 / 668397

Ajax lose their air of invincibility

AMSTERDAM (R) — Last year they couldn't lose. This year they can't win. The swift fall from grace of world club champions Ajax Amsterdam is beginning to look alarming but the club says there is no panic.

The European champion's latest humiliation — Tuesday's 2-0 Dutch Cup defeat by second division Cambuur Leeuwarden from the frozen province of Friesland — continued the rot that set in some time over the winter break.

In the whole of 1995, Ajax lost only once — to Feyenoord in the Dutch Cup quarter-finals — but in 1996 they have won only once in six outings — an uninspiring 3-0 cup win over second division Heracles from Almelo.

"Clearly things aren't going too well but why? We just don't know," captain Danny Blind told Dutch radio.

Loss of confidence and form, a growing injury list

and the distraction of transfer speculation have combined to

unsettle the team that swept aside all comers last season.

Willem II, who ended Ajax's record 53-match unbeaten run in the league, Israeli side Maccabi Haifa and lowly Cambuur have all managed within a month what AC Milan, Real Madrid and other European soccer greats have failed to do in the last 18 months.

Apart from those three reversals, in the league, a friendly, and the Cup respectively, Ajax have drawn with Belgium's Anderlecht in another friendly and had to come from behind to salvage a 3-3 league draw with Sparta Rotterdam.

January's sorry tale is summed up in Ajax's goal tally — nine for, 10 against.

The Amsterdam side's lead at the top of the Dutch league has been scythed to two points from eight just a month ago. PSV Eindhoven smell blood and, with 16 wins from 20 games, look poised to set the pace should Ajax continue to struggle.

For their visit to Cambuur Ajax were without six regulars, including goalscorer

winger Marc Overmars who last week underwent surgery on his left knee. He will be out for the best of the season.

Teenage striker Patrick Kluivert has the shadow of a court appearance hanging over him. He is accused of dangerous driving after a fatal accident in the Dutch capital last September.

Kluivert, midfielder Edgar Davids and defender Michael Reiziger have all been linked with possible moves to AC Milan, while the latest rumour doing the rounds suggests inter Milan are interested in Nigerian striker Nwankwo Kanu.

Ajax must get their act together for several key games coming up over the next few weeks. They play Real Zaragoza in the two-legged European Super Cup next week, return to European Cup action with a quarter-final against Borussia Dortmund on March 6 and

face PSV in the league over

eastern.

The players will not have relished the national headlines on Wednesday. "Ajax is no longer Ajax," said Algemeen Dagblad "Ajax deeply wounded" — De Volkskrant "Ajax brought back down to Earth" — Trouw.

Coach Louis Van Gaal, still confident in his team, refused to blame Cambuur's frozen, bumpy pitch for the latest upset and praised the lowly opponents for a well-deserved win.

"Sure, it's disappointing. We failed to score for a second time but we're still creating chances. We're also now getting punished for making mistakes," he said.

Another coach closely monitoring Ajax's form is Dutch national manager Guus Hiddink. The Amsterdam side provides the backbone of his squad which is preparing for the summer's European championships in England.

Sydney disappointed by TV rights decision

SYDNEY (R) — Sydney 2000 Olympic Games organisers said on Wednesday they were disappointed by an International Olympic Committee (IOC) decision to sell television rights to the Euro-

pean Broadcasting Union (EBU).

Chief of the organising committee Gary Pemberton said the selling of the rights to the EBU rather than a news corp consortium would cost the Sydney Games a potential budget surplus of a \$130 million (\$96.2 million).

Pemberton told a news conference he had conveyed Sydney's disappointment to the IOC which had decided to accept the EBU's \$350 million offer in favour of a \$510 million offer put forward by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp consortium.

The IOC said on Tuesday it had sold television rights for successive Olympic Games from 2000 to 2008 to the EBU, which represents public broadcasters, for a total of more than \$1.4 billion.

Despite the disappointment, Pemberton said the European rights deal, along with earlier deals for U.S. and Australian rights, meant the games committee had already achieved a \$4.0 million surplus over its proposed television budget of \$1.1 billion.

"The potential bonus to the Sydney Organising Committee could have been in the order of Australian \$130 million. We are very dis-

appointed with that," Pemberton said.

A joint IOC-EBU statement said the IOC had decided to stay with the EBU, which has broadcast all Olympics to Europe since the 1961 Rome Games.

"These decisions were taken based on the EBU's experience and expertise, and on the interest of the Olympic movement and all viewers in Europe (including Eastern Europe), North Africa and the Middle East," the statement said.

The agreement covers the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney for \$350 million, the Winter Games in 2002 in Salt Lake City (\$121 million), the 2004 Summer Games (\$394 million), the 2006 Winter Games (\$135 million), and the 2008 Summer Games (\$443 million).

On top of the \$1.442 billion total, the IOC will also receive 50 per cent of EBU profits along the lines of a pioneering deal reached with U.S. network NBC late last year.

NBC agreed to pay \$2.3 billion for the U.S. rights to the 2004, 2006 and 2008 Games, but will also give the IOC 50 per cent of its advertising revenues after production costs.

The Geneva-based EBU represents 65 member broadcasting organisations in 49 countries across Europe but also in the Middle East and North Africa.

Ewing, Malone, Robinson are All-Star reserves

NEW YORK (AFP) — Long-time All-Stars Patrick Ewing, David Robinson, Karl Malone and John Stockton were among 14 players named Tuesday as reserves for the 1996 National Basketball Association All-Star Game.

It marked the 10th All-Star selection for Ewing, the eighth for Malone and Stockton and the seventh for Robinson. The reserves are chosen by a poll of NBA head coaches.

The Eastern Conference reserves are Terrell Brandon of Cleveland and Reggie Miller of Indiana at guard, Ewing of the New York Knicks and Alonzo Mourning of Miami at center and Vin Baker of Milwaukee, Glen Rice of Charlotte and Juwan Howard of Washington at forward.

The Western Conference reserves include Stockton, Seattle's Gary Payton and Sacramento's Mitch Richmond at guard, Robinson of San Antonio and Denver's Dikembe Mutombo at center and Malone and San Antonio's Sean Elliott at forward.

Richmond, the Most Valuable Player of the 1995 All-Star Game, will make his fourth All-Star appearance. The starters, who were chosen by fan balloting, were announced last week.

Forward Grant Hill of the Detroit Pistons is surrounded by two members of The Chicago Bulls and two members of the Orlando Magic in the East starting lineup. Michael Jordan of Chicago will start in the backcourt with Penny Hardaway of the Magic, Scottie Pippen of the Bulls starts at forward with Shaquille O'Neal of the Magic at center.

Two members of the Houston Rockets — center Hakeem Olajuwon and guard Clyde Drexler — will start for the Western Conference.

Charles Barkley of Phoenix and Shawn Kemp of Seattle will start at forward and guard Jason Kidd of the Dallas Mavericks will start in the backcourt with Drexler.

NBA fines Hardaway, O'Neal

The National Basketball Association fined New Jersey Nets coach Butch Beard \$7,500 and Tim Hardaway of Golden State and Shaquille O'Neal of Orlando \$5,000 each for separate incidents.

Beard was fined for criticising the referees following the Nets' 100-98 home loss to the Los Angeles Lakers. Hardaway was fined for making an obscene gesture to the referees after his ejection with 1:41 left in Golden State's 108-91 loss to Utah.

African Nations' Cup

Tunisia through to final

DURBAN (AFP) — Unseeded Tunisia continued to surprise at the African Nations Cup here on Wednesday as they ousted Zambia 4-2 in their semi-final.

Adel Sellimi (2), Zoubeyr Beya and Kaies Godhbane scored for Tunisia, and Dennis Lota and Hilary Makasa got the goals for Zambia.

Tunisia equalled their best performance — in the 1965 final, Tunisia lost 3-2 to Ghana after extra-time.

Zambia, who were lethargic and lacking in ideas, have the consolation of reaching their third semi-final in four tournaments since 1990.

Sellimi scored in a superb move out of the blue after 15 minutes.

Striker Mehdi Slimane shrugged off two defenders to cross from the by-line, and Sellimi, closely marked by Harrison Choongo, got the faintest of touches to guide the ball inside James Phiri's right hand post.

Then on 28 minutes, Beya put Tunisia further ahead with his second goal of the tournament.

He struck a perfect free-kick from the left into the top right hand corner of Phiri's goal.

Tunisia were well on top

during the half as further efforts from Sellimi and Soufiane Feki were blocked by Phiri.

However just before the first goal, Zambia's Dennis Lota missed a great chance to put his side ahead.

Kalusha Bwalya, the tournament's top scorer with five, fed Lota on the right, but Tunisian keeper Chokri El Ouair blocked the shot.

Then Andrew Tembo missed a golden opportunity to pull one back as he misused from 10 yards.

Just after half-time, Godhbane lobbed keeper Phiri from 25-yards to virtually fin-

ish off Zambia at 3-0.

The Zambians rallied and pulled a goal back in the 68th minute.

A shot by captain Kalusha Bwalya cannoned off the chest of El Ouair and Lota, following up, steered the ball into the net.

Then, Elijah Litana brought down Mehdi Slimane with four minutes to go, and Sellimi scored his second from the spot to restore the three-goal gap.

But Makasa fired home in the second minute of time added on, with a scorching 25-yard drive for his moment of glory.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMARA HIRSCH
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ONLY THE BRAVE

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH

♠ K 5 2

♥ A Q

♦ K Q

♣ Q J 10 9 8 7 2

SOUTH

♠ Q J 10 8 6

♥ A 7

♦ K 5 3

♣ A 10

ed at the recent Fall North American Championships in Minneapolis was the Life Master Pairs. It did not take long for the mette of some

declarers to be tested. This deal is from the second qualifying round.

North's two-club response created a game force, and both North and South described their hands fully before settling in four spades. It would seem that 10 or 11 tricks are automatic, but look what happened at some tables.

West led a diamond to declarer's ace. The queen of spades lost to the ace, and a diamond return was taken by the king as declarer stuffed a heart. A spade to the jack and another back to the king drew the

outstanding trump, and the queen of clubs was led for a finesse.

At most tables West took the king and declarer had no further problems. But some defenders, including Paul Soloway of Mill Creek, Wash., and Steve Robinson of Arlington, Va., smoothly ducked by playing the 10. Those declarers could not resist a second finesse, and the roof fell in.

In with the king of clubs, West shifted to a heart. Declarer was forced to take the finesse, losing to the king, and a heart back removed the only entry to dummy before the ace of clubs could be unblocked. Declarer still had a heart to lose for down one!

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CINEMA

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Magic leads Lakers to win Bulls, Sonics upset Rockets, Nets

INGLEWOOD (R) — In one of the biggest comebacks in sports history, Earvin "Magic" Johnson returned to professional basketball Tuesday night, more than 1,500 days after retiring because he was infected with the AIDS virus.

Minutes into the first quarter, Johnson strode onto the court to a thunderous standing ovation and proceeded to dazzle fans and players alike on the way to the Los Angeles Lakers' 128-118 home victory over the Golden State Warriors.

Looking at times as if he had never been away, Johnson — a 10-time NBA all-star — showed a sell-out crowd of 17,505 that his repertoire of skills remains almost as sharp as ever. He finished with 19 points, 10 assists and 8 rebounds while playing only 27 minutes.

"A legend comes back," read a hand-written sign held aloft from the stands of the Great Western Forum.

"This is one of the most exciting days of my life — ever," the 36-year-old Johnson said at a post-game news conference. "I just came out here to have fun, and I did."

Coming off the bench, the bulked-up, 6-foot-9-inch

(2.06 metres) Johnson alternated between power forward and point guard, the position he revolutionised in the years he led the Lakers to five NBA championships.

He looked rusty at times, still offered up glimpses of the Lakers' "Showtime" era in the 1980s with no-look passes and "baby skyhooks" that brought the crowd to its feet.

Even on the sidelines, Johnson's presence appeared to electrify his teammates as he coached and shouted tips from the bench.

It was Johnson's first appearance in a regular-season NBA game since before November 7, 1991, when he retired after announcing that he had tested positive for HIV, the precursor to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Johnson flirted with the idea of a comeback several times, and on Monday, saying "it's now or never," he finally made it official. He signed a \$2.5 million contract to play the remainder of the season for the Lakers.

Johnson's return makes him the first athlete playing professional sports to have openly admitted to being infected with the HIV virus —

"basketball's most valuable outpatient," as Los Angeles Times columnist Mike Downey put it.

Two seasons ago, another Johnson comeback bid ended abruptly after several players expressed fears about competing against someone with HIV in the rough-and-tumble — and sometimes bloody — action of the NBA.

But this time, Johnson — who has no symptoms of having developed full-blown AIDS — believes his peers are educated enough to realise that the risk of contracting HIV in a basketball game are infinitesimal. Experts say the disease is transmitted almost exclusively by sexual contact or blood transfusion.

A number of NBA stars have welcomed him back, and Johnson's first opponents, the Warriors, showed no hesitation about going head-to-head against him.

"The NBA players are smart enough to know that you get the virus from unprotected sex, and we're not going to have unprotected sex on the basketball court," Warriors centre Rony Seikaly said after the game.

As Magic fever spread, tickets for several upcoming

Lakers home games quickly sold out, and the price for seats being offered by independent ticket brokers for Tuesday night soared to as high as \$300. Turner network television immediately dumped its regular programming and scheduled the Lakers-Warriors game for a nationwide broadcast.

Johnson is following the same path out of retirement blazed by fellow basketball legend Michael Jordan, who returned this season after a 17-month absence and has led the Chicago Bulls to a sizzling 39-3 record.

The game against the Warriors is considered only a warmup for a Johnson-Jordan showdown at the forum on Friday night when the Lakers go up against the Bulls.

Johnson says he wanted to come back so his young children could see him play and to have another chance at winning an NBA championship.

He is now expected to turn the Lakers into an instant contender. The team has surged recently, winning four in a row to compile a 25-18 record, putting them in a virtual tie for second place in their division.



Orlando Magic guard Anfernee Hardaway goes high to score despite Boston Celtics' defenders Rick Fox (left), Dino Radja (centre) and Pervis Ellison (right) during first half action, January 30. The NBA contest was played in the Orlando Arena (Reuters photo)

RESULTS							
LA Lakers	128	Golden State	118	Phoenix	114	Miami	99
Chicago	98	Houston	87	Orlando	104	Boston	99
Indiana	107	Atlanta	90	Denver	88	Minnesota	86
				Dallas	105	LA Clippers	101
				Seattle	97	New Jersey	88
				Sacramento	102	Toronto	75

EASTERN CONFERENCE				WESTERN CONFERENCE			
Atlantic Division				Midwest Division			
	W	L	PCT	GB		W	L
Orlando	31	12	.721	—	San Antonio	27	13
New York	27	15	.643	3½	Utah	28	14
Washington	21	21	.500	9½	Houston	29	16
Miami	19	25	.432	12½	Denver	18	25
New Jersey	17	26	.395	14	Dallas	14	27
Boston	15	27	.357	15½	Minnesota	11	30
Philadelphia	8	34	.190	22½	Vancouver	10	33

Central Division				Pacific Division			
	W	L	PCT	GB		W	L
Chicago	39	3	.929	—	Seattle	32	11
Indiana	29	14	.674	10½	Sacramento	23	16
Atlanta	24	18	.571	15	LA Lakers	25	18
Cleveland	22	20	.524	17	Portland	21	22
Detroit	21	20	.512	17½	Phoenix	18	23
Charlotte	21	21	.500	18	Golden State	18	25
Milwaukee	15	25	.375	23	LA Clippers	16	26
Toronto	12	31	.279	27½			

Bailey accuses Christie of faking injury

LONDON (AFP) — Linford Christie was accused by Donovan Bailey of faking an injury after losing the world 100 metres title to the Canadian in Gothenburg last year.

British team captain Christie finished flat out on the track clutching his hamstring after finishing sixth in the final.

But 28-year-old Bailey declared here on Tuesday: "A fit Linford Christie ran that race. Absolutely no-one was injured in that race."

Christie limped off clutching an icepack to the right leg as Bailey celebrated with a lap of honour around the Ullevi Stadium.

Bailey added: "He was first out of his blocks, but was overtaken. You watch it again. He was back in the village a couple of days later ready to run the relay if your guys (Britain) were going to make the final."

"A short time later he ran 10.03 in Zurich. That answers the question. Me and my

coach and the other competitors know that no-one on the final was injured. I don't have to mention any names."

Bailey, though, declared his continued respect for 35-year-old grandfather Christie — and laughed out suggestions that the Briton will not be running in the Atlanta Games.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Graf to miss French indoor

PARIS (AFP) — Steffi Graf, women's tennis joint number one, has not fully recovered from a front operation and will miss February's French Indoor Open here, it was revealed on Tuesday. "She is not able to say when she will be ready to return to the circuit," organisers said.

Graf, 26, had an operation to remove bone splinters from her left foot in December and missed the Australian and Tokyo Opens.

Boxing promoter Dan Duva dies

NEW YORK (AFP) — Dan Duva, who promoted fights involving world champions such as Evander Holyfield, George Foreman and Sugar Ray Leonard, died Tuesday after a fight with cancer. He was 44. Duva had surgery last year to remove a brain tumor. He appeared to be recovering, but suffered a relapse late last year and had been in failing health. He died Tuesday morning at a New York hospital.

Over the past 15 years, Duva promotions included champions Sugar Ray Leonard, Thomas Hearns, Evander Holyfield, George Foreman, Lennox Lewis, Pernell Whitaker, Michael Moorer, Meldrick Taylor, Mark Breland, Alexis Arguello, Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum, Vinny Pazienza, Rocky Lockridge, Johnny Bumpus, Livingstone Bramble and Frankie Warren.

Karim

In preparation for the great of "Holy Ramadan" we uncover a generous family in Ifar table laden with the gifts of our village Khawabie.

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Layali Ramadan

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Nestle Cream Canned
JD 0.590 each

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141 gram (502)
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Knorr Chicken Noodle Soup Mix
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Now 5 packs for JD 1

Walnut Halves
JD 5.500 kilo

From Germany Bruggen Musli
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Now JD 2.000

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JD 0.750
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Taste Our Kattayef

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At least 53 killed, 1,000 wounded in Colombo bombing

COLOMBO (Agencies) — An explosives-laden truck crashed into Sri Lanka's central bank Wednesday and exploded, igniting fires in high-rise office buildings and creating panic in the business centre. At least 53 people died and 1,400 were hurt in the attack blamed on Tamil rebels.

Dozens of bodies were strewn in the street and downtown buildings. Raging fires prevented rescuers from reaching the heart of the carnage.

Flames engulfed at least a half-dozen buildings, blocking police and rescuers. Thick columns of black smoke rose over the city. At least a dozen tall buildings were damaged.

Ambulance sirens screamed and people rushed from their offices into the street.

Helicopters hovered over rooftops, trying to get low enough to pick up survivors trapped on top of burning buildings. Medics picked up casualties from streets stained with blood near the seafont.

A second explosion was heard shortly after the first, but its cause was not immediately clear. Gunfire was heard right after the 11 a.m. blasts, which occurred about one minute apart.

Officials blamed Tamil Tiger rebels, who have fought a 12-year war for independence that has cost nearly 40,000 lives. There was no immediate statement from the Tigers.

Army troops sealed off the city centre, which has been a target in the past for rebel commandos and suicide bombers.

The director of the national hospital's trauma unit, Dr. Hector Weerasinghe, said that at least 53 people have died.

Hospital sources say another 1,000 people have been admitted for treatment and 100 are in critical condition.

Others were sent home after receiving first aid, meaning as many as 1,400 people may have been injured, the sources said.

More than three hours af-

ter the midday blast, ambulances were still bringing dead and wounded into hospitals and many more were trapped and feared dead in burning buildings.

A military spokesman said it had to be the work of the Tigers.

"It has to be (the Tamil Tigers). Who else would have done a thing like this?" military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe told Reuters. He said he did not have casualty details.

A ministry of defence statement read out on state television said the blast was at 10:45 a.m. (0515 GMT). "Security has been tightened in the capital and the situation is under control," the statement said.

All doctors and nurses in the Sri Lanka capital were ordered to report for duty following the blast and urgent appeals for blood donors were broadcast over radio and television.

Buildings in a radius of 500 metres of the nine-storey central bank complex were damaged when the three-wheel truck exploded and the whole area, packed with pedestrians and vehicles at the time, was thrown into chaos.

Firemen, using turntable ladders, pulled screaming office workers from the upper floors of buildings, some with holes punched into their facades and enveloped in billowing black smoke.

Police and soldiers carried moaning victims and mangled bodies from the buildings into roads strewn with rubble and overturned and burning cars.

Injured were bundled into buses — some with blood-drenched clothes and gaping wounds — and rushed to hospital.

Intelligence sources have been saying for weeks that a suicide squad from the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was planned in Colombo.

The LTTE has been fighting since 1983 for an independent homeland in the north and east of this island nation at the foot of the Indian subcontinent. More than 50,000 people have been killed in the fighting in the past 13 years.

Wednesday's attack began shortly after 11 a.m. local (0530 GMT) when three people jumped from the moving truck outside the central bank building and began firing at random, a senior military official said.

The truck sped on to smash into an iron gate at the entrance of the central bank, a three-tower complex some 500 metres from the office of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, which was unscathed in the attack.

Eyewitnesses reported two explosions — a small one followed quickly by a massive blast — and more gunfire.

Military sources said two rebels were captured away from the site of the bombing.

Initial reports said the bank's governor, A.S. Jawardena, was in his office on the top floor at the time but was safe. The damage appeared to be confined mainly to the ground and first floors, eyewitnesses said.

The explosion left a huge crater outside the central bank, which manages the finances of the country.

The attack on Wednesday was the latest in a string blamed on the LTTE. On Nov. 11 last year, at least 15 people were killed when two suicide bombers said to be from the LTTE blew themselves up in central Colombo.

On Oct. 20, Tamil Tiger guerrillas blew up two key oil installations in Colombo. More than 20 people were killed, including at least one suicide bomber.

A few weeks earlier a suicide bomber blew up 24 people in the fashionable Embassy district in an explosion which police said was originally targeted at a passing motorcade.

Sri Lanka's army ousted the LTTE from its headquarters in the northern peninsula of Jaffna in December after several weeks of sustained fighting. Spokesmen for the rebels have said the LTTE has regrouped in the jungles south of Jaffna and will maintain their guerrilla campaign for independence.



Navy troops carry a badly wounded man from the scene of a Tamil Tiger rebel suicide bomb attack which devastated the

heart of the Sri Lankan capital Colombo on Wednesday (Reuters photo)

Academicians: Keep Jerusalem apolitical

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli academics gave their advice Tuesday on the vexed question of Jerusalem, which both Israel and the Palestinians claim as their capitals.

Their answer? Keep politics out of it, and live together in the Holy City without broaching the thorny question of sovereignty.

"The issue of sovereignty should be frozen for 30 years, and the two sides should simply talk about division of powers in Jerusalem," said Ruth Lapido, an international law professor, at the forum at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

The Israeli government and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) are to begin talks on the final status of Jerusalem and the territories in May.

But academics are already involved in informal talks about the city's future, said

Faisal Hussein, the unofficial Palestinian minister for Jerusalem.

"Then when the negotiations start, there will be more than one scenario to work with," he said last week.

The scenario put forward here was one of compromise between Israel, which "annexed" East Jerusalem in 1967 and claims the whole city as its capital, and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) which wants the eastern sector, home to 600,000 Palestinians, as the capital of a future state.

"A compromise could be reached without evoking the notion of sovereignty, which has lost much of its meaning," Mr. Lapido said.

Israelis should take charge of Jewish holy sites in Jerusalem while the Palestinians would be responsible for Muslim sites, she said.

The city could be split into separate districts with Israeli mayors running Jewish quarters and Palestinian mayors running Arab areas.

Another professor, Ira Sharansky, said the two sides should take a pragmatic approach and avoid upsetting the other with political claims.

"Ambiguity is the key to the future of Jerusalem. It's thanks to ambiguity that the city has been relatively peaceful since its occupation in 1967," Mr. Sharansky said.

He cited the example of Orient House, the PLO's de facto headquarters in the city. Although Israel bans Palestinian political activity in East Jerusalem, it has done nothing to stop foreign officials from visiting the Orient House or shut the headquarters down.

Israel's ambiguous position allows the Palestinians to

consider the Orient House as a symbol of their sovereignty over East Jerusalem," Mr. Sharansky said.

Palestinian inhabitants should also get dual nationality so they can vote in both Israeli and Palestinian elections, he added.

However, the academics' views on Jerusalem's future seem far removed from that of the politicians.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Saturday: "It would be stupid to make Jerusalem a Berlin" by dividing it. He said the Holy City had "never in history been an Arab capital," and that its status as Israel's capital was non-negotiable.

Mr. Arafat has promised during his campaign for president that he would work for an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

45 held in Egypt for trying to revive Jihad

CAIRO (AFP) — Police Wednesday announced the arrest of 45 alleged radicals accused of plotting assassinations and attempting to revive the Jihad group which killed President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

The 45 men were arrested Monday in coordinated police raids on hideouts in the Mediterranean ports of Alexandria and Port Said and the Nile Delta province of Qaloubiya, an interior ministry statement said.

It said money, leaflets and other incriminating documents were seized during the arrests. New members in the group were indoctrinated with militant beliefs and taught martial arts.

The defendants confessed to carrying out armed robberies to fund their activities, the ministry said. It said the defendants planned attacks on important buildings and assassinations of public figures and security officials as part of the revival of Jihad.

The suspects have not yet been charged. Over the years — particularly during the last four years of a militant drive to overthrow the secular government — various defendants have been tried for attempts to revive Jihad. Two men were executed last year after conviction on a such a charge.

The Jihad, or holy war, failed in an attempt to overthrow the government after Sadat's assassination.

Editor gets jail term in Alfi slander case

CAIRO (AP) — Acting under a disputed press law, a court on Wednesday sentenced the editor of an opposition newspaper to one year in prison for publishing that a government minister's son ran out on a restaurant bill and beat a waiter.

The ruling comes as a blow to Egypt's journalists, who have fought an unsuccessful battle to overturn a press law imposed last May which increased punishments for publishing false information or inflammatory stories about state institutions.

After a journalists' strike last summer, President Hosni Mubarak pledged to delay implementation of the law while a committee wrote a new proposed press law.

But the committee's deliberations have run on for months, and the independent Centre for Human Rights legal aid estimated in a recent report that 22 journalists are being tried and 64 have been called for questioning under the law.

Wednesday's sentencing to prison at hard labour and a fine of 15,000 Egyptian pounds (\$4,500) for Magdi Ahmad Hussein, chief editor of Al Shaab, came after a slander suit was filed by Alaa Al Alfi, son of Interior Minister Hassan Al Alfi.

Mr. Hussein's defence was that he did not mention the son's name or that of the minister in the article headlined "thuggery of a high-ranking official's son."

seven seek presidency of JEA

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Seven candidates had nominated themselves for the presidency of the Jordanian Engineers Association (JEA) by Wednesday evening, but most of them are likely to withdraw on the election day, Feb. 9.

Two Islamists and four independents will be running for the JEA presidency. The incumbent, Leith Shbeilat, who is at present detained for charges of lese majeste, is also seeking reelection, his lawyer Jawad Yunis said.

Although the two main blocs within the JEA, the Islamists and the nationalists, said earlier they will not be nominating candidates for the presidency, they adopted other tactics "in case something pops up," according to Ali Abu Sukkar, a leading Islamic Action Front (IAF) member.

He said front will run in the elections, in theory, but that it will withdraw its candidates on the election day.

The two Islamist candidates are Zuhair Kaseh and Hassan Hawamdeh. The independent candidates are Abdul Fattah Touqan, Na'el Istieieh, Ijrayed Khawaldeh, and Hani Ta'ani in addition to Mr. Shbeilat.

Nominations close today. Nationalists are expected to field a candidate at the last moment but will withdraw him on election day.

The Islamists and nationalists are, however, concentrating on the vice-presidency since it could be elected by the council as a successor to the president if the seat was vacant.

Candidates for the vice-presidency rose to 10 by Wednesday. Three of them are Islamists and could be considered as very strong

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkish troops kill 'leader' of leftists

SIVAS (AP) — Turkish troops on Wednesday killed the suspected leader of a leftist underground group along with six other militants in this rugged eastern province, the area's governor said. Mete Nezhil Altinay, reportedly the leader of the Revolutionary Peoples Salvation Party-Front, DHKP-C, was among those killed in a clash near the village of Yukiasarick, said governor Aydin Guclu in Sivas, some 450 kilometres east of Ankara. The group had claimed it assassinated one of the country's most prominent businessmen and two associates in January. It has also claimed responsibility for several bombings and attacks on security personnel in big cities. The DHKP-C is known to have bases in this province and collaborate with Kurdish rebels fighting for autonomy.

Police, citizens clash in Sudan; many injured

KHARTOUM (R) — Police and residents clashed outside a church in Khartoum North, the Sudanese capital's twin city, a newspaper reported on Wednesday. The independent Al Rai Al Akhar newspaper said a number of policemen and residents were injured and several people arrested during the incident which took place on Tuesday. It said the clash occurred when a police force began a routine patrol to clear a Christian-run market in Khartoum North of unlicensed mobile traders and of women selling food to people eating in public during Ramadan. When the police force reached the building of the Anglican church in the area, some citizens and street boys began to throw stones at the patrol. Al Rai Al Akhar said. A public prosecutor who accompanied the force then ordered police to respond with teargas, it said.

Death penalty sought in Beirut killing

BEIRUT (AP) — The state prosecution Wednesday demanded the death penalty for two men accused of killing the U.S. ambassador who two companions in Beirut during 1975-90 civil war. But the defence argued that the case be dismissed in line with a general amnesty for war crimes declared by the government after the conflict. The no-jury, three-judge appeals court adjourned until March 13, when a verdict may be handed down after repeated postponements because of legal technicalities. The delays prompted the U.S. embassy to issue an unprecedented statement late last year demanding a speedy conclusion for the trial. Ambassador Francis E. Meloy and Economic Counsellor Robert O. Waring disappeared with their Lebanese driver Mohammad Moghrabi in June 1976 at a militia checkpoint as they crossed the "green line" that separated Beirut during the civil war. Their bullet-riddled bodies were found several days later on a beach in west Beirut. Three Lebanese men were convicted of the slayings and sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment in May 1994. Two of them, Bassem Mohammad Farh and Nameq Ahmad Kamel, later came forward before the court and exercised their legal right for a retrial. They have pleaded innocent. The third, Toufic Mohammad, remains at large. Prosecutor-General Adnan Adoum demanded that the three be sentenced to death, insisting he had submitted sufficient evidence of their guilt.

Arafat faces uphill battle to amend charter

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — President Yasser Arafat faces an uphill battle to honour his pledge to remove calls for the destruction of Israel from the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) charter, Palestinian and Israeli experts said Wednesday.

But they said the wily politician still has more than one trick to play in the 90 days remaining to an Israeli deadline for action. Jamal Sourani, secretary-general of the PLO's Executive Committee, set the clock ticking Wednesday when he said the panel would meet soon to pick a date for a special session of the PLO parliament, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), to consider amending the charter.

"The executive committee will meet within a week's time to decide on calling the PNC session," he told AFP. He did not say where the meeting would take place.

Under the terms of the peace accords with Israel, Mr. Arafat committed himself to changing the 1968 charter no later than two months after the inaugural session of the Palestinian self-rule council which was elected on Jan. 20.

But formal amendments to the charter can only be made by a two-thirds vote of the 630-member PNC.

and the needed special session of the body can only be called by the 16-member PLO executive.

Israeli officials have said they will freeze the peace process unless the charter is changed on time, although Mr. Arafat has some latitude since there is no imposed date for opening the legislature. The first session is not expected before the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan in late February.

Most of the PNC members live in exile and have not tasted the fruits of the autonomy agreements with Israel which have achieved limited self-rule for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

"Arafat's mission will not be an easy one," said Ali Abu Hilel, a PNC member representing the left-wing Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

"There are many members of the PNC who will not vote to change the charter until the total end of Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state," he said.

In a bid to help Mr. Arafat out, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said that all PNC members could enter the Palestinian territories for a meeting to change the charter.

Most PLO factions, including the DFLP and the

Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, have said they would send members back for a PNC meeting.

While analysts said their presence in territories ruled by Mr. Arafat could provide him with additional leverage in a charter vote, he still appeared far from having the two-thirds support needed to change the charter.

"It's not going to be easy for Arafat, even if he juggles with the arithmetic," said Israeli political analyst Mark Heller, referring to Mr. Arafat's intention to enroll the 88 members of the new legislative council — three-quarters of whom are his allies — in the PNC.

"What Arafat needs to do is what he has always done, use a combination of intimidation and payoffs," which could range from VIP treatment to promises of diplomatic passports or jobs in the new Palestinian National Authority, he said.

Mr. Arafat may also seek to wring more concessions out of Israel by arguing that these are necessary to build a sufficient PNC majority.

"Possibly a few things can be done under the table, mostly concerning the timing of prisoner releases... but nothing on the big issues," Mr. Heller said.

"The (Israeli) govern-

ment doesn't want to give its opposition anything to use against it ahead of the elections," he added by October, he scheduled.

Salim Zanoun, an Arafat ally who is acting chairman of the PNC, remains cautiously optimistic.

"I'm sure that more than two-thirds of the members will be here for the meeting," he told AFP, adding that he believed opposition to changing the charter could be overcome.

"I was in Hebron yesterday where there are 50 PNC members and most of them told me they would vote to change the charter if Israel commits itself to respect the peace agreements," which call for a partial army withdrawal from the city by March.

Mr. Heller predicted that whatever happens over the next three months, Mr. Arafat would be able to protect the peace process.

"If Arafat's political instincts are as good as I think they are, and if he thinks the charter amendment won't fly, he will find some technical reason to postpone the vote."

"We've missed a lot of targets in the past and I don't think a little more slippage will cause any grievous damage. The peace train can pull into a siding. It doesn't have to be derailed."

COLUMN

Singer known as Prince to wed

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The music star formerly known as Prince, and currently an unpronounceable symbol, has finally decided to tie the knot with his fiancée, known only as Mayte. The wedding, said the singer in a press release, will take place somewhere in Paris on Valentine's Day (Feb. 14), and as a wedding present the bride will be dedicated a symphony, "Kamasutra," by ???'s band, NPG Orchestra. Sorry, but only "family and close friends" will be invited to the ceremony.

Brosnan joins Greenpeace

WASHINGTON (AFP) — France may have ended its controversial nuclear weapons test in the South Pacific, but don't expect protest moves to let up during French President Jacques Chirac's visit to Washington. British actor Pierce Brosnan has joined Greenpeace and renowned activists in calling on Mr. Chirac and President Bill Clinton to complete a "zero-yield" comprehensive test ban treaty and halting the development of new nuclear weapons.

McCartney opens school

LIVERPOOL, England (AFP) — Singer-songwriter and former Beatle Paul McCartney opened a school for actors and entertainers in this northern city where he got by with a little help from his friends. The Beatles bassist pledged to give a few lessons himself — but warned any would-be students not to expect too much, because "I don't know how to write a song." His friends this time round are in the European Union which provided grants totalling £1.3 million (nearly \$2 million) for the scheme, with £1 million pounds coming from McCartney himself. The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts is based in the school where he and his Beatles colleague George Harrison were taught and it already has about 200 students from around the world.

Nanny denies affair with Charles

LONDON (AFP) — Alexandra Legge-Bourke, the nanny of Britain's Prince William and Harry, told friends she never had a romantic liaison with Prince Charles, according to the British weekly Hello. "I have not done the slightest thing to arouse anyone's suspicions. I have never been romantically involved with my boss," the magazine said Friday. She said she had instructed her lawyer to write the 16-member Committee, which would withdraw remarks she had allegedly made, claiming they were false. According to the tabloid, the nanny had expressed her condolences to the royal family for the loss of her baby, at a Christmas party organised by the family. The paper said the nanny's remark was meant to insinuate that the prince's name had gone abroad for the abortion. Prince Charles hired "Tiggy" Legge-Bourke to help raise his boys after his separation from Princess Diana. She was fired in December 1992. Since then, the tabloids have played up her growing influence on the child, two-thirds majority special session